THE TOMMYKNOCKERS

(Part I)

teleplay by Lawrence D. Cohen

based on the novel by Stephen King

First Draft
23 May 1992

ACT I

OVER BLACK

An ominous vibration like an earthquake -- then a WHOOSH!!! of sound as a white slit of light appears at the bottom of the screen and then bright GREEN LIGHT streams out, blinding us. Two words appear above it:

THE TOMMYKNOCKERS

Another WHOOSH!!! -- back to black, the title's gone -- as we

FADE IN:

EXT. HAVEN, MAINE - DAY

CREDITS begin over SHOTS of this sleepy New England village that's not only off the tourist track but off the track of time as well. More fifties than nineties as it slowly comes to life on this, the first day of summer:

There on his bike delivering this morning's Derry News is little BARNEY APPLEGATE with his coke-bottle-thick glasses.

BRYANT BROWN, about to open the HAVEN DINER, dribbles some water on the short-order grill; HISS!!! -- it's ready to go.

ALONG MAIN STREET: MR. COODER crayons today's specials on the plate-glass window of COODER'S MARKET as KIDS rush by now on their way to school, darting around MABEL NOYES as she sweeps the sidewalk in front of her all-purpose JUNQUE-A-TORIUM.

At ELT BARKER's corner SHELL STATION: the gas tanks are being refilled, the bright red COKE vending machine restocked.

ON THE GREEN: old EV HILLMAN, bald and skinny and dressed in his WW II uniform, hoists up the flag -- his daily ritual.

OUT BY THE TOWNLINE: postman JOE PAULSON picks up today's mailsacks. The sign says WELCOME TO HAVEN -- A LITTLE PIECE OF HEAVEN, pop.738.. CREDITS and MUSIC continue as we go to:

EXT. BURNING WOODS - MORNING

Testifying to the sign's claim -- one of those perfect New England pastoral landscapes. We MOVE through the trees to

EXT. ANDERSON/GARDENER FARMHOUSE - MORNING

A failing 12-year-old beagle named PETER -- a milky cataract rendering one eye virtually blind -- lazes on the front porch. He's a major player in our story, and a personable one at that, but right now, we're more interested in his owners, who, if the sounds coming through the bedroom window are any indication, are in the last stages of lovemaking. We run the FINAL CREDIT as we MOVE inside into

INT. BOBBI & GARD'S BEDROOM - MORNING

A PHOTO on the dresser shows a MAN presenting this same dog as an 8-week old pup to a WOMAN 12 years ago. On a chair is a half-packed suitcase. And in bed, the dog's owners today: BOBBI (ROBERTA) ANDERSON -- in her late-thirties, attractive without doing much to enhance her natural beauty, a western novelist by trade -- with her head on the chest of longtime friend and lover JAMES "GARD" GARDENER -- on-the-wagon alcoholic, poet and political activist in roughly that order. In his early forties -- the years less kind to him. And, although hardly a likely candidate, our hero.

BOBBI
Promise you'll call when you get there.

GARD
I haven't even left yet. You getting dependent?

BOBBI
You wish.

GARD
You just work on your book while I'm away and thank God you're saved the reading circuit.

BOBBI
You like it more than you let on.

GARD
Yeah, well, if you don't hurry and get up, I'm gonna miss my bus.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

As Bobbi showers and Gard shaves. they continue bantering:

BOBBI
All those pretty young undergrads, 'Oh, Mr. Gardener, I just love the way you all write poetry....'

GARD
Need I remind you that was <u>you</u> twelve years ago..?

BOBBI
I was never so earnest...

GARD
Or so complimentary. I'm sorry to disillusion you, but it's just a lot of blue-haired matrons and their bored --

At which point she shrieks as if she's being murdered -- the hot water switched to ice-cold with absolutely no warning.

INT. BASEMENT - MORNING

Clutching a towel around his waist, Gard -- followed by an annoyed Bobbi in her terrycloth robe -- fumbles for a wall-switch -- two naked 60-watt bulbs feebly illuminate the cellar as they make their way down the ramshackle stairs:

GARD
You sounded like Norman Bates just stuck his head in and said howdy.

BOBBI
Very funny. Instead of a poet, why couldn't you have been something useful -- like a plumber?

They cross the dirt-covered floor to reveal an old kitchen table covered with Con-Tact paper and an old gooseneck lamp -- a small repairs workplace of two people who are neither very good nor very interested in small repairs.

GARD
I don't recall you being much of a wiz with mechanical stuff, either.

BOBBI
A plumber poet -- I like that.

He opens the metal door of the hot water heater. A jumble of frayed and ancient wires inside -- badly, sadly out of date. Shot. On their dismayed faces, we hear:

HILLY (OS)
'Last night and the night before
Tommyknockers, Tommyknockers
Knocking at the door --'

And now a small child SCREAMS as we go to:

INT. HAVEN LUNCH - MORNING

DAVEY BROWN, four years old and usually sunny dispositioned, runs in terror from his teasing ten-year-old brother HILLY:

HILLY
'I want to go out, don't know if I can -
'cause I'm so afraid
Of the Tommyknocker man!'

Davey seeks refuge in mother MARIE's waitress apron:

DAVEY
Mom! Make him stop!

HILLY
Fraidy cat.

CONTINUED:

DAVEY
Am not. Am not. Am not.

HILLY
Are to. Are to. Are to.

MARIE
That's enough now, Hilly -- stop torturing your brother and get ready for school.

HILLY
But, Mom --

Dad BRYANT looks up from his short-order grill:

BRYANT
You heard your mother. And come right home -- you have chores to do.

HILLY
Gramps says you're only a kid once.

BRYANT
For once and for all, Gramps doesn't pay the bills around here. I do, and as long as I do, you do what I tell you to. Is that clear, young man?

HILLY
Yes, sir.

He runs out -- Davey following adoringly on his heels:

DAVEY
Wait up, Hil.

BRYANT
Don't slam --

But it's too late -- the door slams behind them with a BANG! Bryant gives Marie exchange a look.

MARIE
You were awfully hard on him.

BRYANT
Hell, I love him, but somebody's got to be the disciplinarian around here. Your dad spoils him rotten.

MARIE
He's his whole life.

INT. JUNQUE-A-TORIUM - MORNING

EVERETT HILLMAN -- aforementioned flag-hoister and garrulous

CONTINUED:

widowed grandfather of Hilly and Davey -- enters this shop that stocks just about everything:

EV
Well if it isn't the always beautiful Mabel Noyes. Top of the day, Mabel, top of the day.

Mabel, the skinflint proprietor on whom such pleasantries are wasted, rolls her eyes.

MABEL
What can I do you for, Ev?

EV
A gift for a brilliant 10-year-old.

MABEL
Hilly, I take it. How bout a model plane?

EV
Too ordinary.

MABEL
Kites are all the rage.

EV
Nope. I want this to be something.. different. Something special.

MABEL
Why didn't you say so right off?

She produces a box -- it's a magic set:

EV
Magic....now that's the ticket. How much?

MABEL
Twenty buckaroos.

He sneaks a peek in his wallet: a lonely ten is all he's got.

EV
Don't suppose you'd take half now, half when my pension check comes in?

Mabel points to a prominent sign that reads CASH ONLY. NO CHECKS, CREDIT CARDS OR EXCEPTIONS. Dismayed:

EV
Didn't think so.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

CONTINUED:

Dispatcher BECKA PAULSON, in her forties and weighing in at 203 pounds -- make that 204 as she inhales a jelly donut -- watches Oprah on a small TV as the phone rings. She pushes the MUTE on the remote and answers:

BECKA
Sheriff's office, Becka Paulson speaking. Yes, it's important. Be sure to home right at 6 -- I'm making that new chicken Key-ev like those Ruskies eat. It squirts real butter when you stick your fork in.

INT. POSTOFFICE - BACK ROOM - DAY

JOE PAULSON sorts the mail while he speaks to Becka:

JOE
Sorry, hon -- I gotta work late.

BECKA (OS)
Oh, Joe -- not again. That new postmistress is a tyrant.

JOE
She has a different way of doing things than old Charlie Estabrooke, all right.

BECKA (OS)
Well you tell her for me that I like my husband home for dinner.

Joe turns to see said postmistress NANCY VOSS right behind him, hands on her hips, looking at her watch impatiently.

JOE
Will do. Gotta run --

He hangs up the wall phone receiver.

INT. DISPATCHER'S STATION - DAY

A dismayed Becka shakes her head in frustration:

BECKA
That woman is running him ragged.

Clicking the sound back on Oprah, she sees one last jelly donut in the box. What the hell -- she polishes it off.

INT. POSTOFFICE BACK ROOM - DAY

As Joe turns to face his superior:

NANCY VOSS
Now, Mr. Paulson -- where were we?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE
I was about to deliver the first class mail.

NANCY
So you were...are you ready?

JOE
Ready as rain --

She unbuttons her blouse provocatively, and randy as hell, he comes for her. Things heat up -- they breathlessly vanish under an Express Mail (NEITHER RAIN. NOR SNOW. NOR HEAT. NOR GLOOM OF NIGHT. OVERNIGHT. GUARANTEED) poster.

INT. BOBBI AND GARD'S PICKUP - MORNING

On the way into town -- Gard driving, Bobbi in the passenger seat, Peter lodged happily between them.

BOBBI
You don't have to do this, you know. Tell Eva Braun to get stuffed and stay here.

GARD
I'm going to buy us a new hot water heater when I can get back.

BOBBI
I can afford it.

GARD
I want to pay for it.

This is a source of pride for him, and she knows better than to push it. Hearing his own nerves, he apologizes -- softer:

GARD (cont)
Besides, it's time I did this. See if I've still got the stuff.

She puts a hand over his on the wheel.

BOBBI
It'll go fine. I know it will.

EXT. HAVEN BUS DEPOT - DAY

As Gard starts to board the bus for Boston, Peter starts to get on with him:

GARD
No, pal, stay. Take good care of our old lady while I'm gone, you hear?

Peter, who adores him, barks once -- damned straight I will.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARD
A failed poet and a Western novelist. Who'd've thought we'd end up with a kid that talked so good?

BOBBI'S POV - GARD'S BUS

As it pulls away, a small wave from Gard out the window.

ANGLE FEATURING BOBBI

A small wave back -- plus a little whimper from Peter to say he misses him already.

A POLICE CAR

toots its horn. RUTH MERRILL -- town constable and Bobbi's best female friend, a trim 50 but looking 40 -- pulls over:

RUTH
Howdy, stranger.

BOBBI
Hey yourself, Ruth.

Peter struggles to put his front paws up on her cruiser to say hello: she has a doggie treat ready for him.

RUTH
You like that, don't you? Yeah.
(to Bobbi)
How's the writing coming?

BOBBI
It isn't. I guess it just isn't ready, whatever 'ready' is.

RUTH
'It'?

BOBBI
That mysterious part of me that wills dreams into my old Underwood.

RUTH
When are you going to trade that old thing in and get yourself --

BOBBI
A word processor? No, as the world hurtles down Microchip Alley, I'll stick with my old standby, thanks.

RUTH
You sound like Gard.

CONTINUED:

BOBBI
It must be rubbing off. Join me for a cup of coffee?

RUTH
Can't. I've got the preschoolers coming in. How bout dinner one night while you're single?

BOBBI
Done. In the meantime, do you know anybody who can fix a hot water heater that's shot to hell?

RUTH
Delbert Chiles could do it.

BOBBI
Anybody else. He always looks at me as if he knew exactly what I'd look like with my clothes off.
(a winking joke)
Not much but I guess I'd do in a pinch, right, Pete?

Pete barks; this is one dog that knows his lines .

INT. HAVEN LUNCH - DAY

Bryant takes a ten from the cash register, hands it to Ev.

EV
Thanks, son. I'll pay you back.

BRYANT
Forget it.

EV
No, I've kept a list of every cent I ever borrowed. When my pension check comes in, I'll pay you back .

As he goes off, Bryant shakes his head. Under his breath:

BRYANT
And pigs will ride broomsticks.

MARIE
What's that?

Bryant turns, smiles at Marie:

BRYANT
Nothing, honey. Nothing at all.

EXT. COODER'S MARKET - DAY

CONTINUED:

Bobbi, a bag of groceries in one arm and sipping from a can of Coke with her free hand, is about to get in her pickup.

MAN'S VOICE (OS)
I hear you've been having a little trouble with your hot water heater.

She turns to find DELBERT CHILES, the local macho plumber who thinks he's God's gift to women. Peter doesn't much like him, either -- ears down, ready to defend.

BOBBI
You hear right. Easy, Pete.

DELBERT
Maybe I could come by and fix your - - 'plumbing.'

Bobbi looks up at him -- a withering glance.

DELBERT (cont)
Or we could go out steppin'.

BOBBI
You damn well know I live with Jim Gardener.

DELBERT
Yeah, well, I could show you a few steps that old drunk looney can't.
(all charm, he sidles up)
You don't know what you're missing.

BOBBI
I'm pretty sure I do, which is why I'm saying no.

Nothing deters this guy; he corners her against the truck.

DELBERT
C'mon, darlin' -- I'm hot to trot.

BOBBI
Maybe this'll cool you down.

She pours the Coke down the front of his pants. As he howls.

INT. HAVEN POLICE STATION - DAY

A group of excited TODDLERS and their teacher MISS EDWINA THURLOW are on a field trip at this old Victorian house that's been converted into a police station. The kids buzz with excitement, holding hands as Ruth takes them on the official tour...past the holding cell...

CONTINUED:

RUTH
This is where we keep people who break the law..and this is the dispatcher's area where Mrs. Paulson takes down important police calls...don't you, Mrs. Paulson?

Becka, her nose in a supermarket rag detailing Elvis' latest whereabouts, puts it down and does her best to look official.

RUTH
And this..this is what I call my schoolroom --

She leads them into

INT. RUTH'S "SCHOOLROOM" - DAY

Filled with little pew-like benches on which are propped dozens -- no, hundreds of dolls. An extraordinary collection. The kids oo and ahh in delight.

RUTH
When I was your age, my parents traveled a great deal, and every time they came home, they brought me a doll. From the Far East. From Africa. All around the world.

MISS THURLOW
Aren't they just the dearest things? Now remember, little people -- look, don't touch.

LITTLE GIRL
Are dollies your hobby?

RUTH
I guess so. People knew I liked them, so they brought them for me from their travels. My late husband did, too, and when it got too crowded, he built this schoolroom so they had their very own place.

The kids clamor excitedly around the dolls -- one little girl about to yank the pullring in the MRS. BEASLEY doll's back:

MISS THURLOW
N-n-n-no, Norma -- we don't want to break anything, now do we?

Ruth, who has a different philosophy, encourages Norma:

RUTH
Touch Mrs. Beasley all you want, honey. She's never been broken yet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Norma tugs Mrs. Beasley's pullring; she obliges by saying:

MRS. BEASLEY
Good morning. Do you want to have a shower?

Ruth smiles, turns to see Davey Brown hanging back in the corner, staring at LUMPKIN THE SCARECROW doll.

RUTH
Davey Brown, isn't it?

He nods with those big saucer eyes, sucking his thumb.

RUTH (cont)
Do you want to come see Lumpkin up close? No? How about Howdy Doody?

He shakes his head -- a glint of fear in his eyes.

MISS THURLOW
Come now, Davey. Be a little man.

DAVEY
Don't want to.

Ruth, now convinced the woman's stupid, tries to intercede:

RUTH
Don't force him --

But it's too late -- the teacher drags a resisting Davey by the hand, pulling him over toward the dolls.

MISS THURLOW
He's just being shy.

Anything but -- he shrieks up a storm, freaked out:

DAVEY
No, no, NO! Please, don't make me!

He yanks free, running into Ruth's legs for comfort.

RUTH
There, there. It's okay, sweetie. There's nothing to be afraid of.

EXT. HAVEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLGROUNDS - AFTERNOON

Ev watches anxiously as Hilly rips off wrapping paper to discover -- the magic set. Reads the cover aloud:

HILLY
"Thirty new tricks! Hours of fun for the young prestidigitator."

CONTINUED:

EV
That's magician in English. Is it okay?

HILLY
Thanks, Grampy. It's boss. Except --

EV
Except what?

HILLY
Dad says there's no such thing as magic. Dad says --

EV
Dads forget things being Dads, that's what happens to grownups.

HILLY
But you're a grown up --

EV
No, I'm an old man. Kids and old people -- they know magic's real no matter what anybody says. Why, there's even a place that's magic.

HILLY
A place?

EV
In my day, it was known as Big Injun Woods. You know it as Burning Woods. But whatever they're called, those woods are magic. The Injuns thought so -- and so do I.

HILLY
You mean they're haunted?

EV
Ayuh. Magic spirits...

DARKNESS

And in it, a cacophony of bird, animal and insect sounds -- casting a spell that's nature's own claim to magic. BOOM -- like a rifle exploding, a FLOCK OF BIRDS shoots into the sky -- and right behind them, Peter does his best to bark --

BOBBI (OS)
You tell em, Pete -- attaboy!

We're in:

EXT. BURNING WOODS - DAY

CONTINUED:

Behind Bobbi's property are miles of lush green wilderness unspoiled by industry or technology -- trees bordered by rock walls dating back to the 1700s. Along come Bobbi and Peter -- rambling, conversing, scouting firewood for winter:

BOBBI
I know I should be writing, but if you don't tell Gard, I won't either.

BY AN OLD STONE WALL

As they come by, a WOODCHUCK, safely out of Peter's range, rustles leaves, tauntingly peers out from behind a tree.

BOBBI
Do it, Pete -- show your stuff!

Peter musters up an obliging bark -- hardly daunting.

The woodchuck stares beadily back -- far from impressed.

BOBBI
Go on, boy -- show him your world-famous canine attack!

Peter rolls over onto his back, legs comically splayed out. Bobbi laughs, shakes her head.

BOBBI
A real terror, all right.

EXT. OLD LOGGING ROAD - DAY

As they come along, Bobbi takes a rubber ball with a bell inside it from her pocket -- throws it. It bounces and goes

DOWN A SLOPE OF LAND

A deadfall by the side of the logging road.

ON BOBBI

BOBBI
Retrieve!

CLOSE ON PETER

He can't see all that great -- the cataract rendering one eye virtually blind. But that doesn't stop him from giving it the old college try. He obediently goes down, sniffs around in a circle, then looks up at her wistfully.

ON BOBBI

It kills her he's getting old. She points at the ball:

CONTINUED:

BOBBI
Over there, dummy, you can see it.

But he really can't -- sheepish at his failure.

She shakes her head -- makes her way down to retrieve the ball. Only to trip as one of her boots snags something --

BOBBI
Hey --

Arms pinwheeling, she falls to the ground, a branch of a low bush scratching her cheek hard.

BOBBI
Damn.

Peter comes over to her, sniffing and then licking her nose.

BOBBI
Yuck -- you stink!

He wags his tail and grins at her bashfully like he knows it. She rubs her cheek -- blood on her fingers.

BOBBI
The two of us. You can't find the nose in front of you and I'm such a clutz I trip over my own feet.

She stops to examine what caught her foot:

A GLEAM OF METAL

protruding from the mulchy earth -- perhaps three inches.

BOBBI

curiously runs her finger along the metal, blows off dirt. It looks like an exposed piece of an old pork and beans can.

BOBBI
What's this?

PETER

approaches, sniffs at it. Then backs off two paces, sits and goes into the down position and utters a single low howl.

BOBBI

BOBBI
C'mon, it's just an old soup can.

She wiggles it, but it's as solid as rock. Not a soup can at all -- something else, something larger.

PETER

backs up another four paces and sits down again as

BOBBI

Gets down on her knees to examine it more closely -- the metal a dull gray. Places her right index finger on it, and when she touches it this time, it seems to vibrate slightly and make a faint sound -- the hum of a tuning fork. Takes away her finger; looks at it quizzically. Touches it again -- nothing. Clears away more dirt -- six, eight inches of gray metal exposed now -- without finding an end.

PETER

normally cheery, doesn't like this one bit. Barks up a storm.

BOBBI

distracted for an instant --

BOBBI
Chill out, you big baby.

But he howls -- causing her to stand up -- knees popping.

BOBBI
The next thing you'll have me spooked, too. What's wrong, guy?

His good eye glares at that thing in the earth -- he doesn't like it. Literally trembling with fear, shivering all over. A little moan -- please, Bobbi, let's go.

A sudden shiver of gooseflesh:

BOBBI
Okay, okay, you win, let's bug out.

UP ON THE PATH

As they start on their way, she can't help it -- she turns -- looks back over her shoulder down the deadfall.

AT HER EXCAVATION - BOBBI'S POV

The tongue of dull metal doesn't sink back into the ground -- the ground to either side of it decidedly higher.

ON BOBBI

Wondering what's buried there.

INT. HILLY AND DAVEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hilly's under the covers with a flashlight reading MYSTERIES OF THE ORIENT -- the book that came with the magic set. A dry flash of LIGHTNING explodes out the window as a nervous Davey whispers:

CONTINUED:

DAVEY
Hilly?

HILLY
Go to sleep, kiddo.

DAVEY
Aren't you going to, too?

HILLY
I'm reading about Harry Houdini.

DAVEY
Who's that?

HILLY
Only the Greatest Magician in the history of the world. Until me, that is.

Little Davey, for whom Hilly is the Greatest Everything, sucks his thumb, watches with huge round, solemn eyes.

INT. BRYANT AND MARIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bryant, in pajamas, joins Marie who's already in bed:

BRYANT
He's reading under the covers.

MARIE
Do you think this is it? Do you think magic is his calling?

BRYANT
(puts his arm around her)
We'll see. Hilly without screwups would be like McDonalds without hamburgers.
(turning off light)
Night, honey.

MARIE
Night.

Both of them lie there wide awake at the thought of their hyperkinetic son, unable to sleep.

INT. BOBBI'S LIVING ROOM/GARD'S BOSTON HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

We INTERCUT their late night phone chat as Bobbi turns off lights, lets Peter out to do his business, etc.

BOBBI
We found a great cache of firewood.

CONTINUED:

GARD
No luck starting the novel, huh?

BOBBI
Just because I'm feeling a little blocked's no reason to rub it in.

GARD
That foxy young schoolmarm and gruff buffalo hunter haven't met up yet?

BOBBI
I hate you.
(a beat; seriously)
Hey. You okay?

GARD
Never better.

INT. RUTH'S SCHOOLROOM - NIGHT

Ruth looks in at the silent room full of dolls. Softly:

RUTH
You made that kid really unhappy. What did you do to him?

The dolls look back with glass, shoebutton and sewn eyes.

RUTH (cont)
Come on -- give, you guys. Which one of you mugs scared him?

The dolls look back silently. She feels a stir of fright coil in her stomach and up her spine. And then it's gone.

EXT. BOBBI AND GARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Very still, very quiet. A FLASH OF LIGHTNING in the night sky, then a BOOM OF THUNDER follows. Inside, Peter howls.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Waking Bobbi from a sound sleep -- his howl like an infant screaming in the grip of a nightmare.

BOBBI
Pete?

In the outer room, he whines mournfully.

BOBBI
Don't be such a baby. It's just a storm. Go on, now. Settle down.

She turns and goes back to sleep. The camera, however, picks up something in the next room, and goes to investigate --

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A GREEN LIGHT is shining on the wall. It bobs up two inches, moves left, then right. Then, as Peter turns, we sees the light is coming from him, from his left eye! No, not the eye -- it's the cataract that's glowing -- the side of his face lit with a lurid green light that makes him look like a comic book monstrosity. He's shaking -- really scared now -- as we MOVE right into his indelibly glowing eye --

END OF ACT I

(CONTINUED)

ACT II

INT. RAMADA INN BASEMENT - BOSTON - MORNING

A small poetry gathering, it seems at first. Twenty, thirty people -- diverse faces and ages. Then a MAN rises:

LEADER
I'd like you all to say hello to a new friend of ours from Maine.

Gard stands up -- far from a new ritual for him:

GARD
Hi, my name's Jim, though my friends call me Gard, and I'm an alcoholic.

All around him, an assemblage of friendly AA faces respond:

AA GROUP
Hi, Gard.

GARD
I woke up this morning, and well, I wanted all the booze in the world. Course none of you would know what I'm talking about.

Ad-libbed laughs, grunts of recognition, you know it brother.

GARD
You see, I haven't had a drink now for almost a year. When I'm dry, I'm pretty boring and unable to write, but when I'm drunk I become someone else -- and that person's a monster. But like my friend Bobbi says, knowing is one thing and doing something about it is another.

Mumbled grunts -- nods of assent, ain't that the truth.

GARD (cont)
I've got to read a poem tonight in public, and the truth is I'm scared to stand up there without a drink. I'm scared to death.

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - MORNING

Hilly, in fake mustache and black magician's hat and cape, performs SHOW and TELL for his classmates and teacher.

HILLY
The Mysteries of the Orient present their first revelation -- the Cat in the Hat -- Ta-daaa!!!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He takes off his top hat -- pulls out Victor the family cat who squirms out of his grip and runs off as Hilly receives great applause led by best friend BARNEY APPLEGATE.

HILLY
And now, my next trick from the mysteries of the Orient: the Magic Guillotine. Behold its sharpness!

He puts a cigarette in the cradle of a toy guillotine. Slams the razor-blade down -- BLAM!! it's cut in two. Kids watch wide-eyed as:

HILLY
I need a volunteer.
(suddenly no takers)
You, Barney Applegate.

Barney nervously comes forward -- the blade suddenly looking very lethal as he inserts his finger into the cradle:

BARNEY
I hope you know what you're doing.

HILLY
Ladies and gentlemen -- the famous Magic Guillotine!!!

Barney squeezes shut his eyes as Hilly slams the blade down.

HILLY
Ta-daa!!

Barney worriedly holds up his hand -- his finger a stub!

GIRL CLASSMATE
Oh my God! He cut it off!

But then Barney flips it up -- miraculously whole. He grins:

BARNEY
Gotcha.

HILLY
The Amazing Magic Guillotine!

The kids applaud like crazy; Hilly beams in triumph.

HILLY
For my next trick, I need another volunteer.

Various kids raise their hands shouting "me, Hilly, me!" But he selects prissy bow-tied teacher DICK ALLISON instead:

HILLY
You sir. Mr. Allison.

CONTINUED:

MR. ALLISON
Me? Oh, I don't think so...

BARNEY
Go on, Mr. A -- be a sport.

The kids start applauding -- chanting "We Want Mr. Allison!" He's less than thrilled, but it's hard to say no.

MR. ALLISON
Okay, okay. What's the harm, right?

HILLY
And now -- the Famous Water in A Handkerchief trick!

MR. ALLISON
Let's go, Hilly. Make it fast.

Hilly pours water from a pitcher into the handkerchief -- only to drench the front of the unamused teacher's pants.

MR. ALLISON
Damnit, Hilly!

HILLY
I'm sorry, Mr. Allison -- the book said it was infallible.

MR. ALLISON
Well, I guess it's not, is it?

He starts to storm away -- an embarrassed Hilly in pursuit:

HILLY
If you'll just give me another chance, I could do the Multiplying Coin Trick --

But as Mr. Allison pulls away, the Hidden Coins for that trick spill out of Hilly's sleeve, causing his audience to clap and hoot equally hard. He bursts into tears, runs out.

EXT. BOBBI'S STUDY - AFTERNOON

Bobbi tries to work in the cluttered corner of the room she calls a study. The shelves are filled with westerns (Louis L'Amour, Zane Gray) and eleven of her own, but there may not be a twelfth as Bobbi types a few words on her ancient old Underwood. Takes a drag from her cigarette. Frustrated and feeling antsy, she pulls out the page. Reads it, hates it:

BOBBI
Argggghhhh!!!

She crumples it up, tosses it. Peter bounds over, barking.

CONTINUED:

BOBBI
What is it, boy? What d'you want?

He ducks in the kitchen, returns with his bowl in his mouth.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

As she pours warm water over his Gravy Train at the sink, he barks at her -- hurry up already, I'm hungry.

BOBBI
Okay, okay. Aren't we frisky today?

He barks back -- damn straight -- as she puts down his bowl. He heads right for it, gobbling it up enthusiastically. As she fills another bowl with water from the tap:

BOBBI (cont)
Nice soft mush for those old teeth.

He looks up at her, then goes back to eating. Something's different about him -- changed.

BOBBI
Pete?

He cocks his head up again -- the milky CATARACT on his eye is half gone! What's more, his muzzle is now more salt and pepper than white. Spooked, she drops the bowl of water to the floor. As it falls in slo-mo, we go to

INT. HAVEN POLICE STATION - DAY

Ruth walks out of her office with ANTHONY "BUTCH" DUGAN -- at 6'8 and 280 pounds, the largest state cop in New England.

RUTH
Thanks again, Butch, but you really didn't have to go to all of the trouble of bringing it down. You could have called. Or FAXED it.

DUGAN
All part of the service, Ruthie.

He looks over to see Becka Paulson smiling up at him goonily:

DUGAN
Well, then...ladies.

He tips his hat, leaves. Ruth sees Becka staring dreamily:

RUTH
What? What?

BECKA
He's sweet on you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUTH
Don't be ridiculous.

EXT. SHELL STATION - DAY

Dugan, getting a Coke from the vending machine (he's addicted to them), checks in on his cruiser radio:

DUGAN
I'll be back in about an hour, boys -- anything new?

INT. DERRY STATE-POLICE BARRACKS - DAY

We INTERCUT his conversation with trooper PETER GABBONS -- nicknamed JINGLES because of his gravelly Andy Devine voice:

JINGLES
All quiet on this front.
(summoning his nerve)
Captain? When you gonna tell that Merrill woman you love her?

DUGAN
Haven't you got something better to do than worry about my private life, Jingles? Like checking out all the diners in northern Maine for health violations?

JINGLES
Aw, Butch.

Trooper BENTON RHODES leans over, chimes in:

BENT
You can bark all you want to, but just because she was your partner's wife and a damned finest constable besides ain't no reason not to speak your heart.

DUGAN
Let it be, fellas.
(a long sip of his Coke)
Let it be.

JINGLES
Bent's right. Time's going by and --

INT. HAVEN POLICE STATION - DAY

As Becka finishes Jingles' thought to Ruth:

BECKA
-- neither of you is getting any younger.

CONTINUED:

She sneaks a glance at Dugan out the curtains...

RUTH
Come away from there!

But when Becka isn't looking, she sneaks a peek out the window to see him driving away.

BECKA
Uh-oh, what time is it?

RUTH
A little after two.

BECKA
(snapping on the remote)
Geraldo's got those people who saw Jimmy Hoffa abducted by Venutians.

Ruth takes the TV remote from her and snaps it OFF.

RUTH
Becka, how many times am I going to have to tell you the only monsters in this world are people -- and what people do to each other. Now go on, there's filing to be done.

She goes into her office. As soon as she's gone, Becka snaps back on the TV low -- there's one of Geraldo's UFO witnesses.

WITNESS
I swear, they all had three heads!

INT. ALL-A-BOARD ANIMALS - EXAMINING ROOM - DAY

Young vet DR. ETHERIDGE conducts a perception test with Peter on the examining table -- Bobbi in the room's only chair.

BOBBI
It isn't my imagination, is it?

ETHERIDGE
The vision in his left eye does seem to be returning, yes.
(clicking on the opthalmoscope)
Let's take a closer look, shall we?

But as he moves to examine him, Peter emits an idling growl.

BOBBI
Peter -- stop that.

In the kennels in back, a dog starts to bark.

CONTINUED:

ETHERIDGE
Hold him steady now --

Peter growls again -- more savage.

BOBBI
Peter -- no!

Now more dogs are barking in back -- a lot more.

BOBBI
I'm sorry, he's never like this --

An AIDE pokes her head in the door -- the ward dogs bugshit:

AIDE
Dr. Etheridge -- you better come --

ETHERIDGE
I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me.

He hurries down the central corridor -- the door slowly swinging shut behind him. Peter's growl turns into a snarl of rage -- and he lunges after Etheridge. On reflex, Bobbi grabs him and pulls him back by the collar. He turns --

CLOSE ON PETER

Insane rage, furious hate in his eyes -- savagely baring his teeth and growling and snarling murderously -- at her!

ON BOBBI

Seeing her faithful dog turned into a bad-tempered stranger.

THE DOOR

shuts, muffling the cacophony, and Peter sits down again -- just good old Peter.

BOBBI
Come on, pal, we're out of here.

Trembling, she manages to get the leash on him.

INT. THE WAITING ROOM - DAY

MRS. PERKINS, the fat owner of a yapping Pomeranian, pets it in her arms as Bobbi comes out with Peter.

MRS. PERKINS
Be a good wittle boy, Eric, and
Mommy will give you a tweat --

Eric spots Peter and sinks his sharp teeth into Mommy's arm:

CONTINUED:

MRS. PERKINS
You little bastard!

She screams and drops Eric on the floor. Peter lurches forward, barking and snarling. As the brainless, mismatched Eric heads for Peter, a PIGTAILED GIRL of 11 with a Porta-Carry on her lap that contains a BLACK RATTLESNAKE shoots out a jeans-clad leg and stomps on one end of Eric's leash and calmly reels him in with great savoir-faire.

Bobbi turns -- a hissing sound to her left -- a BLACK CAT backs up, fur standing up in hackles, green eyes glowing fantastically, mouth ringed with teeth. Its owner, an old BLACK MAN, addresses Bobbi:

CAT MAN
Get your dog out, lady. Blacky don't like im.

Bobbi tries to reign Peter in, but he pulls mightily at the leash while A MECHANIC in blue overalls tries to restrain a BOXER with its right forearm bandaged, its head in one of those surreal Elizabethan collars. Bobbi yanks Peter toward the outer door. Turns the knob, one look back to see

THE ROOM - BOBBI'S POV

Horrifying, comic bedlam -- everything gone berserk:

MRS. PERKINS, blood dripping down her arm and spotting her bright yellow slacks and shoes, screams:

MRS. PERKINS
What if that little bastard gave me rabies?

The receptionist, MRS. ALDEN, tries to calm her;

BLACKIE hisses; terrified with all its hair up --

ERIC the Pom barks in a strangled voice --

The SNAKE rears up in its carrying case like a cobra, its fangless mouth yawning, pink tongue jabbing at the air.

Even the office GERBILS go berserk in their plastic maze.

A literal ANIMAL MUTINY as the office explodes in an uproar, going crazy.

EXT. ALL-A-BOARD ANIMALS - DAY

No sooner outside than Pete settles down.

BOBBI
What did you do, you turkey, huh?

CONTINUED:

He looks up at Bobbi, chagrined, wagging his tail.

BOBBI
Don't give me that. You did this. You.

IN BOBBI'S PICKUP

She opens her door and Peter scoots right into the passenger seat just as nice and normal as can be. About to get in herself, she looks at the Vet office -- just a few yaps now, the uproar inside over just as suddenly as it began.

ON BOBBI

thinking where he's been, what could explain this behavior.

INT. BOBBI'S WORK AREA - DAY

On the phone with a hotel operator in Boston.

BOBBI
Are you sure you're ringing the right room? He's with the New England Poetry Caravan.

OPERATOR'S VOICE
I've rung twenty times, ma'am. Would you like to leave a mesage?

BOBBI
Tell him to call home as soon as he gets in. Tell him -- oh, the hell with it. I'll try later.

She hangs up, stares at the photo of Gard giving her Peter:

BOBBI
Damnit, Gard, where are you when I need you?

EXT. NORTHEASTERN COLLEGE LECTURE HALL - BACKSTAGE - DAY

Gard, suffering a headache and a bad case of stage-fright, chews down a couple of aspirin dry when he hears:

MCCARDLE
Everything all right, Jimmy?

He turns to find PATRICIA MCCARDLE: a thin, glacial creature in a black dress who runs the tour, glaring disapprovingly.

GARD
Ah, Patty -- I didn't know you cared. And no, I have not been drinking.

CONTINUED:

MCCARDLE
I'm dubious.

GARD
You always have been, Patty.

MCCARDLE
(infuriated by his grin)
Listen to me, Gardener, you wouldn't be on this tour if Andy Halper hadn't hanged himself and left me with a hole in the program.

GARD
Ungrateful of him to do that to you.

MCCARDLE
Step out of line for any reason and you're through. I am not a woman to be taken lightly.

GARD
(under his breath)
You're not a woman at all.

A pregnant silence. Then she storms off. Fellow poet RON CUMMINGS sees Gardener pushing his fingers to his temples.

RON
You okay, boyo?

GARD
Never better. Never better.

INT. SHED BEHIND BOBBI AND GARD'S - DAY

Peter observes Bobbi from the doorway as she gathers together a shovel, a crowbar, a spade and a pickax. In the corner, we glimpse stuff stored here -- old glass shower doors, one of those old-fashioned washing machines with a wringer-roller, a defunct Electrolux vacuum cleaner and sewing machine.

EXT. SHED - DAY

Peter by her as she puts stuff in an old Tomcat minitractor. She kneels down to his level, holds his face in her hands -- his formerly white muzzle now salt-and-pepper.

BOBBI
Old Doc Daggett would have seen it, he would have said 'We have to find out where he's been and what he's gotten into, Roberta, cataracts don't recede and dogs don't just get younger.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BOBBI (Cont'd)
' Well, I know where you've been and I've got a pretty good idea of what did it, and I'm going to take a better look at it.

Peter grunts -- right on, let's go.

BOBBI
No, stay.

She points at the porch. He whines, takes a step toward her.

BOBBI (cont)
I mean it now, I don't want you freaking out on me.

Head down, tail dropping, he reluctantly mounts the steps, noses open the screen door, and goes inside -- but not without a last chastizing look at her through the screen.

BOBBI
Settle down. I'll be back soon.

Obeying her command, he goes down on his haunches by the door -- but not without a last mournful little whine.

EXT. ANDERSON PROPERTY - MOVING - DAY

Bobbi moves on the old Tomcat through her garden -- the ree-ree-ree sound of the CRICKETS as she heads into the woods.

EXT. OLD LOGGING ROAD PATH - DAY

Parked above, she brings the tools and makes her way

DOWN THE FORESTED SLOPE

She reaches the site, puts down the tools. Too warm for her sweater, she hangs it up on a branch. Touches the exposed metal -- once again, feels a slight vibration. Makes a fist, raps her knuckles on it; it makes a dull sound. Takes a screwdriver from her back pocket -- hesitates -- then draws the blade against it. It doesn't scratch. She looks at it:

BOBBI
What are you?

Hand shaking, she reaches out, touches it:

BOBBI
<u>What the hell are you?</u>

This time the vibration seems to go into the skin of her hand as a GREEN LIGHT emanates from her find. Then from somewhere -- from the thing in the ground, from the air, perhaps from inside her mind -- she hears very faintly:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A VOICE
Here.

Bobbi swallows. What the hell? Then, a little stronger now:

A VOICE
Dig here....

EXT. BROWN HOUSE - BACK DOOR - AFTERNOON

Ev returns home, about to go in when something catches his eye sticking out the garbage. It's the MAGIC SET.

INT. BROWN ATTIC - DAY

Ev knocks on the door. No answer. Opens it -- peeks his head in to find Hilly staring miserably out the window.

EV
Okay if I come in?

No answer from Hilly. He looks around -- all sorts of stuff dating back decades if not longer stored up here.

EV
Didn't go so well at school, huh?

HILLY
They all laughed.

EV
Let em -- who cares what they think?

HILLY
I do. I practiced so hard. I wanted it all to be perfect.

EV
Course you did, kiddo. You've just got cat whiskers for nerves. All artists and smart guys do.

INT. LECTURE HALL (NORTHEASTERN COLLEGE) - AFTERNOON

A Bennington type POET all in black with Sinead O'Connor's hairstyle winds up her intoning of a personal overwhelming sexual encounter to polite applause. Gard, looking like death warmed over and massaging his pulsing temples -- sits with Ron and the other poets on stage as the pompous head of the Sponsoring Group, PROFESSOR ARBERG -- takes the lectern:

ARBERG
Our last poet is no stranger to those of you who remember that fine little book RAGING ANGEL that gave an authoritative voice to the angst of the last decade.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARBERG (Cont'd)
I trust he will provide us with a memorable finish.Ladies and gentlemen of The Friends of Poetry: James Eric Gardener.

Polite applause. Gard doesn't move. Ron nudges him:

RON
Your turn, boyo.

Gard shuffles to his feet, stumbles up to the podium.

GARD'S POV - THE AUDIENCE

Maybe a hundred people behind the desks of the lecture hall. BLUE-HAIRED WOMEN who've dragged their HUSBANDS here plus ACADEMICS and young earnest would-be POETS.

CLOSE ON GARD

Stage-fright at full throttle, cotton-mouthed. He shuffles papers, raises an unsteady hand to his forehead under the pulsing fluorescents.

GARD'S POV - THE AUDIENCE

Staring at him -- a quiet murmur of unease. McCardle sits unsmiling in the third row -- she'd like nothing better than to see him screw up in front of all these people.

GARD

swallows -- wetting his lips with dumb dismay. It's as if time is standing still. A bolt of pain suddenly rips through his head and he hears a dog BARKING. Suddenly the image of the hall breaks up and he sees

GARD'S VISION - IN THE WOODS

Bobbi digging up something in the ground that's emitting a GREENISH glow. Peter's on the hill above her, barking his head off, but she doesn't pay him any attention whatsoever. He barks louder and louder, but Bobbi just keeps digging. Then the vision breaks apart on rising voices and

GARD

reels from this vision with the force of a roundhouse slap as he finds himself back in the hall, almost pitching himself and the lectern into the audience but grabbing it just in time to looking out to see

GARD'S POV -- THE AUDIENCE

looking at him with noticeable alarm -- McCardle staring with the smug smile of a Cheshire cat.

ON GARD

that smugness does it. He starts:

GARD
Sorry. Please excuse me. I went woolgathering there for a moment.

He pauses, tries to smile.

THE AUDIENCE

Some settle back, looking relieved. A little sympathetic laughter -- if a trifle uneasy still.

ANGLE ON PATRICIA MCCARDLE

A flush of anger. If looks could kill...

ON GARD

Licking his lips. Then:

GARD
I was going to read something new tonight, but instead I'd like to read a poem from my first book.

He opens a battered volume, reads the inscription:

GARD
'This is for Bobbi Anderson. Only for you.'

He reads the first few lines -- it'll be a good poem, not prime Dylan Thomas but damn good -- and as he does so

THE AUDIENCE

settles in, starting to listen, really listen -- an earnest young GRAD STUDENT and his girlfriend in particular as

GARD

Forgets himself and his problems and his nerves and becomes passionate, heartfelt, eloquent and searing. We don't need to hear the poem, we can tell from his face and that of

THE AUDIENCE

rapt in attention, attentive, getting drunk in his vision and captured in his thrall.

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

GARD

as he reaches the end of the poem in a glorious blaze:

CONTINUED:

GARD
And after all of this,
The heart breaks once more
And this time it breaks --
Into happiness.

Silence. A long, endless beat as time seems to stand still. Then he looks out uncertainly into

THE AUDIENCE - GARD'S POV

sitting there, just sitting there. A well of silence.

ON GARD

gulping -- did he screw up? Uncertain -- did it go all right?

THE AUDIENCE

As the YOUNG GRAD STUDENT, tears running down his cheeks, stands up and begins to clap steadily and hard. His GIRL, also crying, joins him. Then, in wave after wave, the poets behind him and the whole audience rise --

ANGLE ON GARD

As Ron, awed, standing behind him, claps him on the back:

RON
My God -- My God, man!

Gard, embarrassed but also very pleased, looks

INTO THE AUDIENCE - GARD'S POV

The faces of people wakened from a dream brighter than any reality as they all applaud. Well, not all of them. McCardle sits, hands clasped tightly together over her small purse.

ON GARD

realizing he's done it, actually achieved that rare moment of grace. Touched by their approval, he mumbles "thank you" as he sweeps up his papers, steps away from the podium. But instead of dying down, the applause increases in volume.

GARD
Stop clapping, you ass.

RON
The hell I will. They're standing!
They're giving you a standing O!

GARD
It's just an old poem.

CONTINUED:

RON
I don't care when you wrote it, it was brilliant!

INT. PROFESSOR ARBERG'S HOUSE - DUSK

One of those academic social nightmares underscored by a Bach etude as people stand in little groups around a buffet. The poets in particular chow down -- the Sinead O'Connor look-alike winking at Gard as she puts little wheels of Bonbels in her dress pockets, others clapping him on the back. Gard, anxious to share his triumph with Bobbi, tries to call her:

GARD
It's a collect call, operator. To anyone from Gard.

OPERATOR (OS)
Just a moment, please.

INT. BOBBI AND GARD'S HOUSE - DUSK

The phone ringing and ringing -- no one there to answer it.

INT. FACULTY PARTY HOUSE - DUSK

As Gard lets the phone ring -- and ring.

GARD
Answer..please answer.

OPERATOR
I'm sorry, Gard, your party doesn't answer. Would you like to try again?

GARD
No, that's okay.

He hangs up. Takes a sip of his water as McCardle strolls by.

MCCARDLE
You may fool them, Gardener, but you don't fool me.

GARD
You're just pissed because I got the biggest hand of the night.

PATTY
I pay you to read new poetry. Not old stuff. When's the last poem you wrote that was any good?

Having drawn blood, she walks smugly off. A long beat, then:

GARD
Bartender --

CONTINUED:

It's the young man who was moved to tears at the reading --

GARD (cont)
I'll have a vodka and tonic --

BARTENDER
Whatever you say, Mr. Gardener.

GARD
I say -- hold the tonic.

INT. FACULTY PARTY - NIGHT

Later now -- and Gard drunk -- more in his cups every moment as he polishes off his drink and observes to the bartender:

GARD
No, don't tell me his name -- it's like that sound you make when you gargle -- Arglebargle, that's it!

BARTENDER
Arberg, actually.

GARD
I like Arglebargle better somehow -- it suits him, don't you think? Professor Arglebargle, hello!

Arberg, standing across the room with McCardle, faintly hears this; half-smiles back. Gard lifts his glass in mock toast.

GRAD STUDENT
I thought your reading tonight was wonderful, Mr. Gardener.

GARD
Thanks. The name's Jim.

GRAD STUDENT
I mean it, sir. Jim. If the reading public had any taste, you'd be our foreranking poet.

GARD
Yeah, well, the poems I've written over the last few years, they're not exactly -- everyone's cup of tea. 'Poetry and politics rarely mix,' said one anonymous editor -- "poetry and propaganda never." Nice alliteration, don't you think?

GRAD STUDENT
I think you're the best poet I ever heard. Ever.

CONTINUED:

Seeing the boy's earnest look -- suddenly absurdly touched:

GARD
I thank you son. Really.
(extending his glass)
Freshen this, will you?

BARTENDER
You want to be careful of that vodka -- it can blindside you.

GARD
(a little too loud)
Who're you -- Jimminy Cricket?

He turns to see

GARD'S POV - MCCARDLE AND ARBERG

They're looking directly at him.

CLOSE ON GARD

dismayed, he forces another big, insulting grin and tips his glass toward both of them, then turns back to the bartender:

GARD
Sorry, son. Sorry.

BARTENDER
Maybe you ought to call it a night.

GARD
Maybe I ought to at that. Grab some coffee, go home early --

Across the room, a MAN who looks like a car salesman but with better taste in clothes pontificates to a small group that includes his noitceably pregnant, Laura Ashley dressed WIFE:

MAN
Thank God the American people are finally getting that Chernobyl business into perspective.

GARD
Who's the salesman?

BARTENDER
Ted something. Some sort of big wheel at Bay State Electric.

CONTINUED:

TED
32 dead. Horrible, of course, but a plane crash a month ago killed 195. You don't hear people yelling for the government to shut down the airlines, do you?

Gard listens openmouthed as Ted gets louder:

TED (cont)
No, 32 is horrible, but it's far from the Armageddon these nuke-freaks made it sound like.

Every one of Ted's words seem like a tin drum to Gard -- the vein in his forehead starting to pulse as continues, louder:

TED (cont)
Hell, they go through targets as fast as they go through rock groups.

Gardener tightens his hand around his glass -- tighter...

TED (cont)
No, it's time they realize that nuclear's the only real alternative. The ONLY --
(louder)
REAL --
(louder)
ALTERNATIVE!!!

Freaking now -- his hand about to shatter his glass.

GARD
No!

He open his eyes, releasing the glass to find

THE COLLECTED

have turned to stare at him. Very quietly:

GARD
Did you know that Marie Curie died of radiation poisoning?

The room is suddenly deathly silent.

GARD
Yep. Leukemia induced by direct exposure to gamma rays. She was the first casualty along the death march with old Ted the Power Man's power plant at the end.

Arberg now steps in diplomatically, takes Gard's elbow:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARBERG
That's all very interesting, Mr. Gardener, and now I think --

GARD
You've got potato chips on your chin.
(slipping away)
At Chernobyl they killed the kids. The ones ten years old, the ones in utero. Isn't that so, Mr. Ready Killowat?

TED
You're a fine poet, Mr. Gardener. But I'm afraid you're not very well-informed about nuclear power.

ARBERG
We all appreciate your passion, Mr. Gardener, but it's late and --

GARD
They killed their children.

PATTY
You're drunk.

GARD
My dear, does a dog piss on a fireplug?
(zeroes in on Ted's wife)
Tell me, my dear, how close is your house located to this nifty new nuclear facility he's building?

TED
I don't have to stand here --

GARD
Not too close. That's what I thought. If hubby here invites you to take a little tour, well, tell him you've got a headache.

TED
Do our enemies pay you, or do you do this for free?

GARD
You know what I'm talking about. You've got data in your files -- elevated cancer rates in the areas surrounding nuclear-power plants, water contamination -- you know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TED'S WIFE
Ted, is he right? Do you know?

TED
Sure, I've got some stats, but --

He breaks off -- a moment of awkward silence. Then his wife steps away from him -- he tries to stop her but she's gone.

TED
Honey --

She runs off to the bathroom. An angry Ted turns on Gard:

TED
You deliberately upset my wife.

GARD
I want her to be upset, damn you.

ARBERG
That's enough now.

GARD
You know, Professor, I always wanted to be at a school where Moby Dick wasn't just another dry classic but an actual member of the faculty.

Ron snorts a laugh; this is getting good.

PATTY
I should have known better.

GARD
Oh shut it, you blue-blooded bitch.

ARBERG
That's it -- out.

As Arberg grabs his arm, the glass tumbles from Gard's fingers and shatters on the floor. He drives his left elbow backward into Arberg's chest; he utters a strangled cry and lets go of him. Gard starts shadow-boxing around him:

GARD
You want to fight? You want to fight, you beefy sonofawhore?

But Arberg clutches his chest like a hammy actor; he wheezes:

ARBERG
-- heart --

GARD
What heart? You mean you have one?

CONTINUED:

PATTY
I'm going to fix you.

GARD
Why, Patty, I've been waiting to be fixed by you for years. Shall we go upstairs or give everyone a treat and do it on the rug?

He turns and she slaps him for all she's worth with rage:

PATTY
You'll never get a grant-in-aid again. I'm going to see you're blackballed from all the magazines. You'll never work again you drunken, contentious, worthless --

GARD
Excuse me, would you?

Taking Ron's drink, he hooks two fingers into the bodice of McCardle's little black dress and dumps the contents inside.

GARD
Cheers, dear.

VOICE
Hey. You.

He turns -- SMACK into Ted's fist. He stumbles into an umbrella stand and knocks it and himself to the floor. Looks up -- here comes a murderous Ted:

TED
I'm going to beat you silly.

Gard seizes an umbrella and runs toward Ted whose eyes widen at he's unexpectedly poked in the belly.

GARD
Caramba, you stupid ass!

TED
Hey! Hey, stop it!

GARD
Andale, andale!

Ted, unnerved, turns to run. Like an insane matador, Gard chases him -- the other guests cowering away, scared.

TED
Help me, somebody, the man's gone crazy! Help!!! Help!!!!

He backs up into the buffet -- the table rocks and then goes

-- plates and silverware falling, the Waterford punch bowl detonating like a bomb as a woman screams.

GARD
(mocking his squeals)
Heelllp! Heelllp!? Is that the best you can do, Power Man?

He brings the umbrella down on Ted's head and it suddenly pops opens, leaving him standing there looking like a mad Mary Poppins. He bellows in triumph!

GARD
Arriba, you nuking SOB!

He throws the umbrella aside -- finds Ron at his side.

RON
You better bug out. McCardle's on with the cops, screaming assault and battery.

Gard looks at the room -- the guests reeling away from him like he has the plague; Arberg clutching his heart like a bad tenor; the overturned buffet table a mess of food, shattered crystal and broken crockery; Ted's wife weeping over him; even the bartender pretty aghast.

GARD
I never should have done that.

RON
What? Hit him?

GARD
Hell, no. Opened an umbrella in the house. It's bad luck.
(a drunken giggle)
Goodbye, all. Thank you for a lovely time, don't bother seeing me out, and if you remember nothing else, remember this --

The roar of police sirens on the way as he backs

OUT A WINDOW

almost killing himself as he tumbles to the ground in the process of making his escape. Stumbling to his feet, he shakes his fist at the partygoers upstairs:

GARD
God hates a coward!!!

END OF ACT II

ACT III

EXT. THE SITE IN THE WOODS - DAWN

Bobbi sits on her knees staring straight ahead in a semi-daze -- only to be startled out of her reverie by Peter howling to high heaven on the ridge above her. It's almost light -- she's been out there all night! She barely takes this fact in when Peter lets out another chilling howl.

BOBBI
Damnit, Peter, SHUT UP!

She stands and backs up -- smack into something that flaps against her, making her cry out. But it's just her blouse. She looks at

BOBBI'S POV - THE METAL

She's uncovered 20 feet of it -- on both sides. Whatever is buried below isn't big, it's huge. No longer glowing.

ON BOBBI

Staring at what she's dug up with wonder:

BOBBI
What in hell --

Above her, Peter howls again. She climbs up to the path where he gratefully licks her hand -- shaking, very scared.

BOBBI
It's your own fault. I told you to stay home.

He nuzzles her, begging to be petted, getting as close to her as he can physically get. She obliges, petting him.

BOBBI
All right, so I'm glad you came. Happy now?

She takes one last look down from the path, staring at it wonderingly, then is nuzzled homewards by Peter. As she goes, we PAN DOWN to

THE EXPOSED METAL

As it gleams dully in the sun, a curious WOODCHUCK (the same one that teased Peter) comes CLOSER to investigate. As it does so, the base starts to emits its GREEN GLOW again. We hear the sound of SEAGULLS and go to:

EXT. A STONE BREAKWATER (NEW HAMPSHIRE) - MORNING

A figure lies near the end of it face down, feet trailing into the Atlantic with the tide coming in. We MOVE IN CLOSER to find GARD -- mumbling in a half-conscious, drunken stupor:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARD
Bobbi....Bobbi...

VOICE (OS)
Mister? Mister, wake up.

He groggily opens one eye:

GARD'S POV - WHAT HE SEES

Blurry, then in focus: a BOY about twelve in jeans and a T-shirt stands at the end of the breakwater by the beach.

BOY
If you don't get up in a hurry,
you're gonna be fishfood.

GARD

sits up -- a bolt of pain shoots through his head so intense he thinks he's having a stroke. Clutches his head in agony.

GARD
Oh hell...

He kicks off his one remaining loafer which floats down into green watery darkness. Forearms on his heads, quivering after his binge, deeply depressed and full of self-loathing:

GARD
What have I done?
(a beat)
Oh, man. What have I done this time?

Wipes his nose -- he's had a nosebleed. Struggles to stand.

KID
This your stuff?

He holds up Gard's totebag and one of his notebooks.

GARD
Yeah.

KID
You okay?

GARD
Do I not look okay?

KID
You look awful.

His grave pronouncement makes Gard grin -- not what he's said but how he's solemnly said it. He grins and the kid grins back, relieved. He lurches up the breakwater and

TO THE BEACH

Takes the bag from the kid's proffered hand -- the boy keeps his distance in case he turns out to be as crazy:

GARD
Thanks.

He looks inside -- money, everything of value gone. Just the notebooks left -- soggy and swollen to telephone book size.

KID
Lucky you got anything left at all. This place is full of ripoff artists.

Gard looks to see a surreal landscape of ferris wheels and rollercoaters silhouetted against the ocean sky.

GARD
Where am I?

KID
Arcadia Beach, New Hampshire. You're a drunk, huh?

GARD
Yeah. How would you know?

KID
My mom. Except she was usually too hung over to talk.

GARD
What happened to her?

KID
She gave it up. Car crash. You were mumbling in your sleep.

GARD
Was I?

KID
Yeah. Not good mumbles.

GARD
It wasn't a good dream.

KID
You were calling some guy named Bobby.

GARD
She. That guy's a she.

KID
Good-looking?

CONTINUED:

GARD
A knockout. And my best friend in the world besides.

FLASH-CUT - GARD'S MIND

Bobbi kneeling by the site in the woods -- the GREEN LIGHT covering her like a shroud -- Peter barking like crazy.

CLOSE ON GARD AS HE REMEMBERS

Suddenly sure in some intuitive way:

GARD
She's in trouble. Bad trouble.

KID
You gonna help her?

GARD
Me? Hell, kid, I can't even help me.

KID
You could try.

GARD
Yeah, yeah I could at that. Thanks -- I think you saved my life.

KID
Welcome.

Gard nods, starts off -- only to hear:

KID
Mister?

Gard turns -- what now? The boy looks at him solemnly with eyes that seem oddly knowing -- an eerie beat. Then:

KID
Be careful, okay?

GARD
You too, kid. You too.

EXT. BIG INJUN WOODS - MORNING

Hilly and Barney explore in the still, humid forest.

BARNEY
My folks'll kill me if they find out we were trespassing.

CONTINUED:

HILLY
Who's going to tell em? Gramps says this is where the Micmac Indians used to pray to their gods...

BARNEY
Give me a break..

HILLY
Really -- they believed this was a place of magic, in between the spirit world and the real --

Only to stumble over something. They look down to find the WOODCHUCK we last saw nosing around the metal. Dead as a doornail but no sign of any foul play.

BARNEY
Uggh -- gross.

HILLY
What killed it?

BARNEY
Probably ate some farmer's poison bait and stumbled out here to die.

HILLY
Or maybe he was a sacrifice to the gods..

BARNEY
Yeah...

HILLY
Shh --

BARNEY
What?

HILLY
Don't you hear it?

Behind the bushes just beyond, there's that low HUM like the sound power lines make on a still day.

HILLY
Gramps was right.

On tiptoe, the boys begin to approach the bushes -- CLOSER, CLOSER -- only for the HUM to get louder as from behind the bushes from the hillside below comes a familiar GREEN GLOW.

BARNEY
Hilly --

CONTINUED:

HILLY
Run, Barney -- run before it eats you!

Freaked, they turn and take off

INTO THE WOODS --

as fast as their feet will carry them now, both of them looking over their shoulders to make sure whatever the hell it is isn't following them -- only to turn back smack into the arms of a large body!

HILLY AND BARNEY

scream their brains out -- only to look up:

THE BODY

belongs to Bryant Brown.

A CRASH OF THUNDER as we go to:

EXT. MAINE TURNPIKE - DAY

Pouring now as Gard, unshaven and barefoot and looking like a male bag-lady, tries to thumb a ride from the shoulder of the road. A car speeds past, splashing him.

EXT. TURNPIKE - LATER

Still no luck. Then from the distance comes a VAN -- painted day-glo like some sixties vision. Gard sticks out his thumb, but it goes by. Then it slows, stops up ahead.

He races over to it, panting. The van door slides open -- a cloud of SMOKE clears to reveal the very stoned members of a band -- think John Couger Mellencamp as a Delaware bar band wearing some very strange but familiar 50s garb:

GIRL
Hey, man, need a ride?

INT. THE VAN - MOVING - DAY

Barreling along in the rain. The girl offers Gard a joint:

GIRL
Want a hit?

GARD
Thanks but if it's all the same, I'd rather have something to eat.

DRIVER
Got a box of crackers. Wally ate everything else.

CONTINUED:

GARD
The crackers are fine.

He eats one gingerly; able to keep them down, he finds he's ravenous, can't get them in his mouth fast enough.

DRUMMER
So, man, what do you do?

GARD
I'm a poet.

DRIVER
A poet? Wow. Where are you headed?

GARD
'The place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in' -- home.

DRIVER
That's nice, man. Real nice. Did you write that?

GARD
Frost. I was going to be the Robert Frost of my generation.

DRUMMER
Bobby Frost. Didn't he have a band?

GARD
Name's Jim Gardener. My friends call me Gard.

DRIVER
Dig it, man. This is Wally, Ward and June, and I'm Beaver. We're the Cleavers.

GARD
Huh?

WARD
The Cleavers. That's the name of our band.

Gard grins with recognition.

GARD
Too much, man. Too much.

A bolt of pain hits his head; he rubs his fingers to his temples, pushes in.

JUNE
Hey, man, you okay?

CONTINUED:

He nods -- takes his fingers away, and for the first time we notice a faint SCAR above his left eyebrow.

BEAVER
How'd you get that scar?

GARD
This? A little souvenir from a skiing accident. I was 17 and determined to impress this rich young deb with my savoir-faire on the slopes. Course I'd never been on a pair of skis but did that stop me? Hell, no. God hates a coward. When I came to, they had filled the hole in my skull with a steel plate, and the doctors told me I might suffer headaches from time to time.

WARD
You're lucky to be alive.

GARD
What they didn't say was every now and then it picks up a radio transmission. Once it lasted long enough for me to write down the names of three songs and then call the station to verify them.

WALLY
Man, that is cool. That is so cool. You're the only dude I ever met who could do a trick that.

GARD
Some trick.

INT. HAVEN LUNCH - DAY

Marie, David and Ev eat lunch as Bryant returns with Hilly.

DAVID
Hilly!!!

MARIE
Where've you been? We were so worried.

BRYANT
He's been in the woods is where he's been.

HILLY
You were right, Gramps -- there was something there, something magical.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRYANT
Upstairs, young man.

HILLY
But Dad --

BRYANT
Not another word. You're grounded until further notice,

Hilly sighs resignedly, heads upstairs -- trailed by Davey.

EV
Boy's always on the jump, just the way I was when I was his age.

BRYANT
As for you, Ev Hillman, this is all your fault -- filling his head with all that make-believe nonsense...

UP THE STAIRS LEADING TO THE ATTIC

Davey, clutching his everpresent security blanket, is right on Hilly's heels as he angrily storms upstairs:

HILLY
Tattle-tale.

DAVEY
Please, Hilly. He made me tell.

HILLY
I hope the Tommyknockers get you.

DAVEY
Please don't be mad --

HILLY
I hope the Tommyknockers get you and you disappear forever!

He slams the attic door, leaving Davey standing there, sucking his thumb.

EXT. MAINE TURNPIKE - DAY

As the van pulls over, sliding open the door to let Gard out.

BEAVER
I hate to you leave you here.

GARD
I'll be all right. Go on, you got a long way to go still.

June presses some bills and change into his hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUNE
We took up a little collection.

GARD
Really, I'm perfectly okay --

BEAVER
You ain't. So cut the crap, what do you say?

GARD
I guess I say thanks. It's all I can think of right now.

JUNE
Get better, understand?

She hugs him and gives him a kiss.

GARD
I don't deserve this.

WARD
Why, sure you do, man. Sure you do.

WALLY
Yeah, you give that Frost guy a run for the money, now, you hear?

GARD
I'll try. Thank you. Thank you all.

He stands at the edge of the ramp, the rain falling a little harder now. They wave goodbye and he at them, watching them as their van gets smaller, his hand still raised in a wave as tears run down his cheeks.

INT. PULP TRUCK - MOVING - AFTERNOON

Gard dripping like a human puddle, teeth shaking as this rickety, museum-old truck belches along driven by a farmer from Haven by the name of FREEMAN MOSS.

GARD
Thanks for picking me up, Mr. Moss.

MOSS
(scoffs)
Shoot a pickle. I don't care what folks say.

GARD
What do folks say?

MOSS
That you're a boozer and a commie liberal, but I don't care.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARD
I appreciate that, Mr. Moss.

MOSS
People are people I always say. They can think what they want. Let em shoot their wives if they want to. Hell, I wish I could shoot mine. How long you been gone?

GARD
Couple days. Anything new?

MOSS
Here? Nah. Same old Haven.

EXT. PULP TRUCK - DUSK

As Gard gets out on the side of the road -- the rain stopped.

FREEMAN MOSS
Sure you don't want me to take ya up the hill? Drop ya at the door.

GARD
That's okay. You've been very kind, Mr. Moss -- I appreciate it.

FREEMAN MOSS
Shoot a pickle.

He pulls off -- leaving Gard to amusedly repeat:

GARD
Shoot a pickle.

EXT. ANDERSON PROPERTY - AFTERNOON

As Gard surveys the wet woods and hayfields, the rays of sunlight beaming down in this long and gorgeous and solemn view -- pastoral in its beauty after the rain now -- the crickets singing in the high grass as sundown approaches.

EXT. ANDERSON FARM - AFTERNOON

Gard comes up the driveway -- past the mailbox that says ANDERSON/GARDENER, past the blue pickup toward the porch.

GARD
Pete? Where are you, boy?

No answer. Silence. No Peter. A little uneasy:

GARD
Bobbi?

GARD'S POV - THE HOUSE

Looking just like it always does -- rustic and pleasant.

CLOSE ON GARD

Some inner voice telling him it's too quiet. But then:

GARD'S POV - THE SCREEN DOOR

is nosed open and out comes Peter who runs up to him, jumps up and wags his tail like crazy.

GARD
Hey, easy, guy. Yeah, I'm glad to see you, too. Where's Bobbi?

Peter whines -- trying to answer. Words are a bitch.

GARD
Where is she, boy? Where's Bobbi?

He looks at Peter -- something different, changed. Then:

THE FRONT DOOR

opens and out comes a figure in silhouette --

VOICE
Who is it? Who's there?

ANGLE ON GARD

GARD
Bobbi? It's me.

CLOSER ON BOBBI

still in shadows -- emerging cautiously:

BOBBI
Gard? Is that really you?

ON GARD

relieved but worried -- something's wrong after all:

GARD
Yeah. Are you all right?

BOBBI

comes down the porch steps and out of the shadows --

BOBBI
I'm fine.

And now he gets a look at her -- smiling, happy to see him, and -- the last thing in the world he or we expected -- looking great. She's radiant -- if anything, a little too much so -- her eyes burning bright as if she's just snorted coke for the first time. She embraces him tightly:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOBBI
Oh, God, I'm so glad to see you. So much to tell you. Wait'll you see -- it should have been you -- you who found it. I think it was for you.

GARD
What was? Found what?

BOBBI
The thing in the woods. At first I thought it was an old truck -- remember when I found the rusted hulk of that old Hudson Hornet?
(a beat)
You'll understand better once you see it, feel it.

GARD
See what? What are you on?

BOBBI
Euphoria. A miracle. I was in the woods with Pete, right --?

She sees his expression -- realizes she's already said this.

BOBBI (cont)
I'm rambling, huh? I guess I need some sleep. And food.

GARD
Slow down...take your time. What happened in the woods?

BOBBI
I heard this voice. At first I thought maybe it's me, my own voice. Telling me to dig it up. I don't know ..all I know is it's fabulous.

GARD
For the last time, will you tell me what the hell you're talking about?

BOBBI
I'll do better than that.
(extending her hand)
I'll show you.

EXT. TOMCAT (MOVING) - SUNSET

As they move through the garden on this miniature tractor:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOBBI
I could have walked past it three times a day for forty years and never stumbled over it --

INTO THE WOODS - AFTERNOON

As they go through them -- Gard listening to her.

BOBBI
It was my destiny to trip over it, I think -- and yours, too, Gard, I just know it.

INTO THE OLD LOGGING ROAD CLEARING

As they pull right up to the edge of the slope. She gets out -- gestures down like a proud parent:

BOBBI
Look.

THE SLOPE

As Gard slowly walks over -- and looks down:

GARD'S POV - THE TRENCH

Impossible to tell from its shape what this METAL THING is, but whatever it is, it's huge. She's dug more of it up -- 30 feet long and 30 feet wide at either end as it rises out of the side of the hill like a fantastic, titanic artifact, exposed and shimmering dully in the twilight sun.

CLOSER ANGLE FEATURING AN OVERWHELMED GARD

It's like seeing the monolith from 2001 for the first time -- and the poet part of him can't help but stand there and just marvel at its very existence -- at its unearthly beauty.

GARD
Good God.

Bobbi behind him -- over his shoulder.

BOBBI
Yeah.

GARD
Look at that.

BOBBI
I <u>have</u> been. It's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen.

GARD
What is it?

CONTINUED:

BOBBI
I don't know. Come and take a look.

She makes her way past him and

DOWN THE SLOPE

Moving confidently toward the exposed metal with the grace of previous experience -- already halfway down --

BOBBI
It's really something, isn't it?

-- only to realize Gard is still up on the slope -- the feeling of unreality never so strong in his life.

BOBBI
Come on, there's nothing to be afraid of.

GARD
Is it real?

BOBBI
It's real.

She knocks on it -- a dull fist-on-mahogany sound.

BOBBI
Go on, touch it.

Gard reaches out -- only to draw his hand back.

BOBBI
I told you -- it won't bite you.

GARD
Then why am I afraid of it?

BOBBI
If you touch it, you'll believe it. That's all I'm saying.

GARD
You make it sound important to you.

She stares at him a long beat; him back at her. He breaks:

GARD
All right. All right, Bobbi.

He reaches out and grasps it -- seeing a look of naked eagerness on her face as she watches expectantly.

At first it emanates that familiar faint VIBRATION as it settles into his hand. Then it stops, and the GREEN LIGHT begins to radiate, but instead of the gentle HUM, it emits a

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOUND like a ghetto blaster turned all the way up. And that sound -- an excruciating electronic visitation -- is coming through the front of his forehead where the doctors filled the hole in his skull with metal.

His hands flying to his temples, he opens his mouth to scream -- his head vibrating with this burst of killing, jarring harmonics so loud it's almost unbearable even for us.

BOBBI

staggers backwards, her eager look replaced by fear, bewilderment, and pain -- throwing out her hands in what seems to be a warding off gesture --

GARD

his nose spouting blood -- his head feeling like it's about to explode -- the blasting sound lasting as long as five seconds, perhaps longer. Too much, <u>way</u> too much -- the damn thing's going to kill him. Then it stops completely -- and he falls unconscious to the ground as Bobbi bends over him:

BOBBI
Gard?! Oh, no -- Gard!

<u>END OF ACT III</u>

ACT IV

EXT. THE SITE - DUSK

Peter makes little mournful sounds as a frantic Bobbi hovers over Gard, wiping his bloody nose with her handkerchief:

BOBBI
My God -- are you all right?

GARD
Yeah. Bleeding's stopped, I think.

He presses the handkerchief firmly on the bridge of his nose as she looks at him anxiously:

BOBBI
I swear I didn't know it would do that.

GARD
I should hope to hell not.

He struggles to his feet with her helping him, looks at the exposed slash of metal in the ground with awe:

GARD (cont)
What is it?

BOBBI
I don't know. But whatever it is, it's real.

Peter barks assent.

GARD
Yeah, well any more reality and I'll be ready for a strait-jacket.

INT. ANDERSON/GARDENER HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Over a huge meal -- rare T-bone steak, fries and broccoli. Bobbi eats ravenously -- going at it like someone who hasn't eaten in a long time. Looks up to see Gard watching her:

BOBBI
You look like I did after I found it. Now you're wondering if you've lost your mind, and I promise you the answer is you're sane. We both are.

(a beat)
I imagine you've got some questions.

GARD
Try dozens.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOBBI
Shoot.

GARD
Pete, first of all. What's happened to him?

Peter, hearing his name, looks up: alert as hell.

BOBBI
His cataract -- it's receded.

GARD
Cataracts do not recede

BOBBI
And dogs don't get younger, either. But look at him -- he looks more like the puppy you brought home twelve years ago than a dog we were afraid we were going to have to put down this summer!

GARD
And you think the thing in the woods did this?

BOBBI
'When you remove the impossible, whatever remains is the truth, no matter how improbable.'

GARD
Oh, c'mon --

BOBBI
I'm different, too. I have all this energy. My head's filled with ideas.

GARD
What -- you're saying that thing did this? Made you feel different?

BOBBI
I know it did.

She nods -- eyes a T-bone with some steak on it:

BOBBI
You want that?

GARD
No.

BOBBI
Sure?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARD
You can't possibly still be hungry.

She grins mischievously and spears it with her fork.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Where they've sat so many evenings before -- Peter on the boards beneath them gnawing on that T-bone with relish. The sense they've been at it for hours now -- both smoking.

GARD
Let's say..let's just say this thing is causing these changes. What're you going to do?

BOBBI
Do?

GARD
About it?

BOBBI
I thought you'd have some idea.

GARD
Me? Just because I've had a whole lot of strange hallucinations in my time doesn't mean I'm good at knowing what to do with them.

BOBBI
(emphatic)
This is no hallucination.

GARD
What's it doing to you? Have you thought about that?

BOBBI
Nothing bad.
(a small laugh)
Nothing I can see, at least.

GARD
You can't see what cigarette smoke is doing to your lungs, either. Maybe this thing is killing you.

BOBBI
What?

GARD
It could, you know. It could be dangerous.

CONTINUED:

BOBBI
I'm not going to talk to you if you're gonna be like this.

She starts to head inside --

GARD
Look -- I had this premonition.

That gets her attention all right -- she stops.

BOBBI
What do you mean?

GARD
I got the idea -- really strong idea you were in trouble. Terrible trouble.

BOBBI
And you came running.
(putting his hand to her mouth, kissing it gently)
My man on horseback. My hero.

GARD
Some hero.

BOBBI
You are to me.

GARD
Bobbi --
(a long beat)
I went off the wagon.

BOBBI
You what?

GARD
I -- I couldn't help it.

She looks at him -- hurt, disappointment evident in her face.

BOBBI
After all we've been through, all we've worked for --

GARD
It was stupid. I don't know what happened -- I had this success and then you weren't around when I tried to phone and oh -- don't look at me like that. Say something. Anything.

BOBBI
Damn you, Gardener.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She turns without another word and goes inside. He looks at Peter who just stares back at him.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bobbi on her side in bed as he comes in -- her back to him as he bares his soul to her:

GARD
Please just listen. I -- I couldn't help it. No, that's a lie, I could have, I just didn't. I..I did it because I'm weak and I'm bent and -- oh, I'm sorry. I don't deserve your forgiveness, but I'm sorry. You're the one person whose love..whose love still matters. I just couldn't go on living if you stopped loving me.

And with that, tears pouring down her face, she turns --

BOBBI
You stupid fool -- don't you know I'll always love you?

She opens her arms to forgive him one more time, and now comfort turns to passion -- and mutual need -- an outpouring of emotion converging into physical love. In a series of DISSOLVES we juxtapose their lovemaking with

THE THING IN THE WOODS

Silhouetted dimly in the moonlight as the wind blows. As we watch, it emits that familiar HUM, its base starts to GLOW..

GARD AND BOBBI MAKING LOVE

Their bodies entangling, sweating, coupling -- but as they do, she seems to hear the hum beckoning her on some hypnotic frequency he can't hear at all as

THE THING

Glows BRIGHT GREEN NOW, radiating stronger and stronger -- as the wind gets brisker and blows surface dirt off the exposed metal and mixes it into the wind...

ON BOBBI AND GARD

As they turn over, she's on top. He looks up, and for a brief instant, there's something almost ferocious in her hunger, her eyes feverishly bright -- a flicker of GREEN GLOW coming from them. Then the angle of light changes and it's gone... just the Bobbi he knows and loves.

WIDE-SHOT - THE THING IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

The town of Haven indelibly silhouetted behind it in the moonlight as the wind blows the oxidized dust toward it.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. EV'S ROOM - DAWN

Barely light -- Ev asleep when he feels Hilly shaking him:

HILLY
Gramps -- Gramps wake up!

EV
What is it, kiddo? What's wrong?

HILLY
I need your help.

EV
Name it.

HILLY
First swear you'll keep a secret.

EV
(hand over his heart)
Swear to heaven.

HILLY
When I was out in the woods, I came up with an idea for a new trick to do at Graduation.

EV
A new one, hey? A good trick?

HILLY
Not good. Great. The best trick anyone has ever seen. One that'll make them gasp and scream and yell. A trick they'll remember forever.

EV
That's an awful ambitious undertaking. But you know something?

HILLY
What?

He swallows, nervously awaiting his grandfather's verdict:

EV
You're just the man to do it.

EXT. PAULSON HOUSE - MORNING

Joe, in deep wader boots and yellow fishing gear, tiptoes out the door. Halfway down the walk when there's a scream:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BECKA
Joe Paulson, get back here this instant!

He stops -- caught. Becka -- a veritable vision still in her robe and cold cream -- rushes out, glaring at him.

BECKA
You ought to be ashamed.

He swallows guiltily.

BECKA (cont)
Didn't you forgot something?

Another guilty swallow -- all he can do now is confess:

JOE
Becka, listen -- I'm sorry -

BECKA
You ought to be.

From behind her back, she produces a huge brown bag.

BECKA
The sandwiches...?

He stares blankly -- what in hell is she talking about?

BECKA
For you and the boys?

JOE
Huh?

BECKA (cont)
On your fishing trip?

JOE
Oh, yeah, right. Thanks, hon.

EXT. NANCY VOSS' APARTMENT HOUSE - DAY

Joe beeps the horn as Nancy, dressed to kill, bounces down the porch stairs and gets into his car.

NANCY
How did it go?

JOE
I almost forgot I told her me and the boys were going fishing.

NANCY
Yeah -- with some awful big horses at the Lewiston track.

CONTINUED:

Under his fishing garments, he's dressed for the races. He peels off garments and throws them in the back.

NANCY
What the hell is that?

It's the brown paper sack of sandwiches Becka prepared.

AS JOE'S CAR SPEEDS AWAY

She throws it out the window into a garbage pail by the curb.

INT. BOBBI AND GARD'S BEDROOM - NOON

Gard jerks awake with a start -- Bobbi staring at him:

BOBBI
About time.

GARD
Hi. You been up long?

BOBBI
Hours. Hurry up, breakfast is almost ready, and I'm starving.

GARD
Again? Come here.

He kisses her -- she pulls back, rubs his grizzled cheek.

BOBBI
You need a shave.

GARD
Yeah, well I'd trade my soul for a long hot shower in the bargain.

BOBBI
Hand it over, then.

GARD
What? Don't tell me -- you called Delbert Chiles.

BOBBI
Not on your life. I did it myself while you were sleeping.

GARD
Yeah, sure -- Ms. Wizard here.

BOBBI
Oh ye of little faith.

INT. BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

CONTINUED:

Gard turns on the hot water tap -- takes the shaving cream out of the cabinet -- only to catch a look in the mirror:

GARD
(wryly)
Why bother? You're dead already.

IN THE KITCHEN

Bobbi, at the stove, cooks strips of bacon -- they sizzle.

IN THE BATHROOM

Gard absentmindedly reaches down to see if the the water's warm yet -- and is scalded. Yanks his hand back, sucking it:

GARD
Youch!

Blisteringly hot water is coming out of the tap -- steaming the lower part of his reflection in the mirror.

IN THE KITCHEN

As he comes past her at the stove, she smiles enigmatically and continues cooking as he opens the door leading to the

INT. THE CELLAR - EARLY MORNING

He comes down the stairs, fumbling for the string cord. The light comes on -- but it's a new light now, at least 200 watts, illuminating the cellar with a brisk white glare.

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS

Instead of the old worktable, three long tables have placed end to end. Gard pushes a light switch and now racks of fluorescents come on one after another, illuminating the room like an operating theater. The table is littered with WIRES and pieces of old DOORBELLS and VACUUM CLEANER parts and BATTERIES. Clocking the changes, Gard goes to the hot water heater in the corner. Squats down next to the white cylindrical bulk. Some impulse makes him touch its enameled side tentatively,and a good thing, too -- it's hot as hell. He opens the hatch at the base and looks

INSIDE

where the copper wires that lead to the tank's burner hang loose, disconnected, free.

GARD

baffled. How's she heating the water? Leans in further to see

INTO THE HATCH - GARD'S POV

CONTINUED:

A weird but ordered tangle of colored wires -- in the center a cardboard egg carton (GRADE A JUMBO) with a D-cell battery, + terminal up, in each cradle. Directly over them, suspended in an arch formed by wires, glows a BRIGHT BALL OF LIGHT, the size of a quarter. A miniature GREEN SAPPPHIRE SUN!

GARD

shocked, really dazed now -- having to put his hand up to shield his eyes from the savagely bright glare.

GARD
What in hell --

Slowly, hesitantly, he reaches toward the opening with his left hand -- keeping his right before his eyes to shield his eyes, so bright he winces his eyes down to slits. Nervously anticipating a burn, he puts the fingers of his right hand

INTO THE TANK

His fingers slowly slip into the hatchway. But there's no barrier -- his fingers striking something yielding like a streched nylon stock -- a cycling, MINIATURE FORCE FIELD!

ON GARD

as he takes in this surreal vision. If he ever wanted a drink in his life, this is the moment.

GARD
Jesus.

ON THE MINIATURE SUN

Circling, pulsing, filling the screen with its energy.

INT. ANDERSON/GARDENER KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Over bacon and eggs and hashed browns and toast and coffee:

GARD
I've heard of home improvement, but this is ridiculous. A miniature sun?

BOBBI
It's something, isn't it?

GARD
C'mon, what's the trick?

BOBBI
No trick. I told you. It came to me. The knowledge.

GARD
You heard voices like Joan of Arc.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOBBI
Sort of.
(eyeing a last piece of bacon; mischievously)
Do you want that?

GARD
Damnit, Bobbi!

BOBBI
It came shimmering out of the air.

EXT. THE SITE - AFTERNOON

On the hillside, Bobbi and Gard staring down at it:

GARD
What -- you're saying whatever's inside that thing made you smart?

BOBBI
I don't think it's coming from inside at all. I think..I think that a very thin layer of whatever it is is sending out transmissions as I uncover it.

GARD
And that's what's been turning you into Einstein?

BOBBI
Hell, not Einstein. Einstein knew things. No, an idiot savant. That's what I am. The hot-water heater? I don't know how it works. When I was doing it, everything seemed as clear as a bell. But now I only remember it in bits and pieces.

GARD
And just what do you think it is?

BOBBI
A meteor that crashed here hundreds, maybe thousands of years ago. Some kind of fantastic energy source.

GARD
Or a coffin. That's what it looks like, you know.

BOBBI
C'mon -- It -- and whatever force is emanating from it -- is good. What's more, what it's doing for me, it'll do for you.

CONTINUED:

GARD
If it doesn't kill me first.

BOBBI
I told you, I don't know why it did that.

GARD
You've already decided, haven't you? No matter what I say.

BOBBI
I want us to dig it up together. You and me.

GARD
And then?

BOBBI
Then I don't know. The next thing will happen, that's all I know.

GARD
And if you're wrong -- if it turns out to be dangerous, what then?

BOBBI
(a beat -- gently)
Suppose you combine a little of your cynical scepticism with a little of my naive optimism and maybe we'll come out somewhere in the middle. Okay?

She turns to go back home, leaving him there staring at

GARD'S POV - THE WEDGE OF METAL

It does look like a coffin and as real as can be -- his reflection shimmering, dully rippling back in the sunlight.

CLOSE ON GARD

making up his mind. Aloud:

GARD
Okay, Bobbi. Okay.

END OF ACT IV

ACT V

EXT. HAVEN GREEN - MORNING

As they park the pickup, Gard about to get out when:

BOBBI
Gard?
(a beat)
Not a word to anyone. This is our secret. Ours alone.

GARD
Hey, I'm an expert in things you shouldn't tell other people. I promise you -- this is one of those things.

INT. CENTRAL MAINE POWER OFFICE - DAY

As Bobbi and Gard face a CNP employee over his desk:

EMPLOYEE
So you'd like to interrupt service.

BOBBI
No, we'd like to stop it.

EMPLOYEE
Of course -- that's just our little euphemism. When customers go away on vacation, we say they want to "interrupt" their power until --

GARD
We'd like to pay our bill up to today and then stop service.

BOBBI
As in stop.

The employee stops writing and looks up -- shocked:

EMPLOYEE
Stop? But what will you do for --

BOBBI
We've made other arrangements.

EXT. HAVEN SQUARE - DAY

Bobbi and Gard emerge arm in arm, laughing like two kids:

GARD
Did you see his face?

CONTINUED:

BOBBI
The nerve -- they're so sure you'll want it back on. Well, we won't --

GARD
Can you imagine what he'd do if he ever saw your solar-doohickey?

BOBBI
If I'm right, I can build one that can power all of Haven and have enough left over for Albion and Troy as well..

INT. POSTOFFICE BACK ROOM - AFTERNOON

Nancy stands in front of a table like a proud mother:

NANCY
Look! Look at what I thought of, Joe! I really ought to patent it.

Joe looks down to see a kid's Lionel train transformer hooked up to a bunch of D-cell batteries -- the gadget wired to seven flour sifters with their screens knocked out.

JOE
What is it?

NANCY
My invention. Watch this!

She turns on the transformer and a number of filament-thin wires hooked to what used to be a blender begin to scoop mail from a pile into the sifters, seemingly at random:

JOE
What's it doing?

NANCY
Sorting the first-class.

JOE
Oh, c'mon, Nance --

NANCY
That one's Haven Village...that's RFD 1, Derry Road, you know...

JOE
How'd you -- ?

NANCY
Think of it? I woke up this morning and it just...you know..came to me. Me! Smart!

CONTINUED:

JOE
Not bad..for a woman.

She whaps him enough to hurt:

JOE
Hey!

NANCY
You want to fight? Come on.

JOE
I'd rather do something else.

NANCY
Like we did last night in the woods?
You wanta do it again, Joe? Do ya?

JOE
Boy howdy, do I!

They slip to the floor -- above them the slithering sounds continue as Nancy's gadget sorts the first class mail.

INT. JUNQUE-A-TORIUM - MORNING

Mabel rings up Bobbi and Gard's purchases -- blasting caps, a pick ax, plastic bubbles full of batteries, etc.

MABEL NOYES
What're you two digging up at that farm of yours --
(wink)
Buried treasure?

GARD
You never can tell, Mabel.

BOBBI
Maybe something better.

MABEL
Well, whatever it is, save some for me -- I wouldn't mind being a lady of leisure, I can tell you that.

As they leave with their purchases, Ev enters the shop:

EV
Hey there, you two. Top of the day.

Bobbi and Gard say hi as they exit. Ev comes up to the counter with a list of things Hilly gave him to buy:

EV
First off, I need some batteries.

CONTINUED:

MABEL
Try the mall over at Augusta.

EV
Huh?

MABEL
Been a real run on em lately -- Bobbi just cleaned me out.

EXT. THE SQUARE - DAY

Bobbi and Gard have run into Ruth.

RUTH
I wasn't expecting you back for another week.

GARD
I..uh.. got back early. Last night.

RUTH
You look tired.

BOBBI
We've been -- burning the midnight oil.

RUTH
Writers. Don't you two ever do anything to have <u>fun</u>?

As Bobbi and Gard look at each other -- blush a bit:

RUTH
Don't answer that.

BOBBI
You guys get caught up. I'll be right back.

She heads for the post office.

INT. POST OFFICE - BACK ROOM - DAY

Joe's face blissfully buried in Nancy's heaving breasts -- and then there's the sound of the BELL in front. They freeze.

IN FRONT

Where Bobbi waits at the unattended counter. Out comes Nancy, blouse buttoned and uniform straightened, cool as a cucumber.

NANCY VOSS
Afternoon, Bobbi. What can I do you for?

CONTINUED:

BOBBI
I got a registered slip Joe left yesterday.

NANCY
Joe -- you got that package for Anderson back there?

As Nancy turns back, Bobbi hears the following -- aloud:

NANCY'S THOUGHTS
I wish she'd leave already so we could get back to doing it.

BOBBI
Sorry?

NANCY
I didn't say anything.

Joe emerges from the back, trying to pretend nothing is going on. He hands the package to Bobbi, unable to look her in the eye -- his mussed-up hair standing ridiculously upright.

JOE
Bobbi.

BOBBI
Joe.

And once again, she hears Nancy's thoughts:

NANCY'S THOUGHTS
Oh, God, look at his hair.

She shoots Joe a look; he smoothes it down as Bobbi hears:

JOE'S THOUGHTS
Uh-oh, we're done for.

NANCY'S THOUGHTS
Last thing we need is his fat cow wife knowing what we're up to.

NANCY
Is there anything else?

Unable to resist, Bobbi tweaks Joe with a parting shot:

BOBBI
Give my regards to Becka.

INT. BOBBI AND GARD'S PICKUP - MOVING - DAY

As an excited Bobbi relates what happened to Gard:

CONTINUED:

BOBBI
I'm telling you, I could read their minds.

GARD
Picked up the vibe, fine. Knew they were having an affair, maybe. But read their minds..?

It does sound pretty far out now that she thinks about it:

BOBBI
You're probably right...

INT. BACK OF DINER - NIGHT

Marie comes out to Bryant sitting on the back stoop, holding his head in his hands:

MARIE
You okay, honey?

BRYANT
Just a little headachy. Something bit me in the woods, I think -- some bug.

MARIE
There's a lot of that summer flu around. You want me to call Doc Warwick?

BRYANT
Nah, he'll just tell me to drink plenty of water -- I'll be fine.

EXT. THE SITE - DAY

Bobbi and Gard stand on the ridge above the buried metal:

BOBBI
You see, the hill is making the thing harder to get out, so we'll simply remove the hillside.

In a WORK MONTAGE over a few day period, we follow their progress as:

By hand and tool, they clear away rocks and small bushes.

Hard work in this heat -- Gard shirtless, sweating up a storm. Bobbi -- eyes blazing, energized and throwing herself into it for all she's worth -- works at a fever pitch atop the minicat. Its front has been modified to turn into a bulldozer -- clearing away earth, stumps and boulders.

Bobbi grins at him; he nods back as they do this together.

AS THEY LOOK DOWN NOW

Standing above it -- having in effect peeled away half the hillside and uncovered a major section of this metal artifact without any end in sight -- the excavation going down thirty or forty feet.

GARD
Whatever this thing is, it's not only an IQ booster; it's a hell of a repellant. Even the mosquitoes don't want near it. How do you feel?

BOBBI
Great. What about you?

GARD
Tired. Bone-tired.

BOBBI
You still don't feel anything?

GARD
Nothing. Not an ounce more energy. Not an idea, not a jot of poetic inspiration.

BOBBI
You can't expect it to come all at once.

GARD
I suppose not.

CHUCK WOOLERY -- THE LOVE CONNECTION

One of those ubiquitous dating shows that manages to steer just the safe side of obscene with leering double entendres.

CHUCK WOOLERY
Do you like your melons soft? Your noodles firm? Your salami hard?

INT. THE PAULSONS - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Joe and Becka eat supper on TV tables in front of the Sony -- a plastic 3-D of Jesus perched right on top. During what follows, host CHUCK and three buxom BLONDES pepper Joe and Becka's conversation at choice intervals:

BECKA
Joe....

JOE
Hmmm..?

BECKA
Do you still love me?

CONTINUED:

JOE
Do I still what? What kind of dimbulb question is that?

On TV, the studio audience goes crazy as the stud volunteers:

TV STUD
I think real men should be the boss -- women love strength in a man, or they take the pants from you!

BECKA
It's just lately you don't seem to care. To show it.

JOE
I don't believe you.

BECKA
Really, Joe. Tell me the truth.

CHUCK
Girls -- how would Dan answer "Sex is good but <u>blank</u> is better"?

JOE
You're crazy, woman.

He pushes away the TV tray angrily -- it topples over with a crash as Becka cowers on the floor. He puts on his jacket.

BECKA
Where are you going?

JOE
How dare you question me? How <u>dare</u> you? I'm going out, and I'll be back when I'm good and ready, got that?

BECKA
But Joe --

JOE
But, but, but!!! <u>But</u> is not a word I want to hear anymore! <u>But</u> is what a goat's got for brains! <u>But</u> is for small-minded people in this small-minded town!

He storms out, leaving her speechless from his rage.

OUTSIDE THE PAULSON HOUSE

Joe's expression of mock anger changes to a triumphant grin:

CONTINUED:

JOE
But is what you say when you want to get away from your stupe of a wife.

He throws his car keys in the air -- yes!.

INSIDE THE HOUSE

Becka, weeping, cleans up the mess --- when she hears:

VOICE
He must think you were born yesterday.

Startled, she looks around. No one there.

VOICE
Yep, born yesterday to believe such nonsense.

It's Chuck Woolery, and he's stopped hosting to look out the Sony and speak to her -- to her, Becka Paulson!

CHUCK
You see, Becka, Joe's been cheating on you.

He winks, and that's it -- she flees shrieking out the door.

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

Panting and wild-eyed, she stops by the clothesline full of Joe's shirts and postal uniforms:

BECKA
It's heat stroke, that's what it is. I'll call the Medix, go to the infirmary.

INT. PAULSON HOUSE - NIGHT

She peers in, then rushes to the phone. Starts to dial when:

CHUCK
Why don't you just chill out before you have a heart attack, Becka?

He's looking at her from the TV with exasperated patience. She hangs up the receiver with a moan:

BECKA
Jesus protect me...

CHUCK
You have to get those ideas about going crazy out of your head. I can talk to you if I want to.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BECKA
TVs don't talk.

CHUCK
Well, this one does. Besides, we have a lot to talk about. About Joe, for one, and his infidelities.

BECKA
He's having an affair?

CHUCK
Yep. He's putting it to that hussy down at the P.O. just about every lunch hour -- and sometimes after quitting time, too.

BECKA
What am I going to do?

CHUCK
Let's ask our contestants, shall we? Ladies, if you were in Becka's shoes, what would you do?

BLONDE CONTESTANT #1
Kill him!

BLONDE CONTESTANT #2
Kill him!

BLONDE CONTESTANT #3
Kill him!

Chuck triumphantly beams out at her from inside the Sony:

CHUCK
You see, Becka, it's unanimous.

Becka falls to her knees, crosses herself in front of the TV.

INT. BROWN ATTIC STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Davey scales the stairs with his chubby four-year-old legs only to find the attic door shut -- a sign on it reading "TOP SECRET." Undeterred, he opens it, sticks his head in to find Hilly wiring and bolting things together with batteries.

DAVEY
Whatcha doon, Hilly?

Hilly furiously springs to his feet, shoving Davey backwards:

HILLY
Out!

CONTINUED:

DAVEY
But Hilly --

Firmly pushing him out, Hilly brooks no resistance:

HILLY
Get out! The Medici princes used to have people executed if they caught them looking at new tricks!

He slams the door in Davey's face. He puts his thumb and end of the blanket in his mouth, tears streaming down his face.

INT. BOBBI AND GARD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A burst of cold wind awakens Gard. He gets up, shuts the window -- only to find Bobbi's not in bed. Not there at all.

INT. BOBBI AND GARD'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

Gard comes down the stairs -- the decrepit stairs replaced by new ones, the rickety bannister now new, thick and solid as well. As he continues down, we see that fresh dirt has been brought in and raked over the root cellar floor. Racks of fluorescents illuminate the room like an operating theater. Bobbi sits at the worktable with her back to him, so engrossed she doesn't hear him:

GARD
Bobbi?

She turns -- her eyes feverish, in some wild work jag -- the table littered with WIRES, the back of an old RADIO and dozens of BATTERIES -- C and D-cells, double and triple-A's -- which she hooks up to her old Underwood typewriter:

GARD
What are you doing?

BOBBI
Modifying my typewriter a little.

GARD
Into what?

BOBBI
A word-accordian.

GARD
A what?

BOBBI
You'll see. It's going to be wonderful

GARD
You've got to get some sleep.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOBBI
Soon. I promise.

GARD
You're gonna drop if you keep this up.
(another beat; then, genuinely curious)
Bobbi? What's it like?

BOBBI
Like a drug -- an incredible, powerful drug. My brain feels like the engine in the biggest Chrysler ever built, idling on fat gas, waiting for me to drop the car into gear and peel out --

GARD
Peel out to where?

BOBBI
Anywhere. The stars if I wanted.

EXT. HAVEN SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

A hot, still end of June afternoon a few days later. Parents and relatives of graduates (Ev in particular) busily capture the ceremonies with Brownies and camcorders -- but the sun beating down makes it all seem a little underwater as lots of white handkerchiefs mop up sweat and fans get a real workout. Bow-tied teacher Dick Allison addresses the crowd:

ALLISON
And now, as a special treat, 5th-grade valedictorian Hillman Brown, will favor us all with a magical invention of his own devising.

ONTO THE STAGE

Strides Hilly in his black magician's cape and hat -- his equipment already in place -- to the assembled's applause.

HILLY
For my first trick, ladies and gentlemen,
(holding up a tomato)
I'd like a volunteer to verify this is a real tomato and not just a fake or something. You, sir --

DELBERT CHILES
It's a tomato, kid, I can see that.

CONTINUED:

HILLY
Okay! Now watch as the Mysteries of the Orient...take hold!

He puts the tomato in the center of the white sheet covering a crate; then covers it with a bright silk scarf. He waves his magic wand over the hump, secretly stepping on a foot pedal concealed by a fold of sheet. A brief low him as:

HILLY
Presto-majesto! The Disappearing Tomato!

The hump in the scarf disappears -- the scarf settling flat. He whisks off the scarf -- the tomato is gone. He looks out.

HILLY'S POV - THE AUDIENCE

Applauding. No gasps or shouts -- just polite applause.

HILLY

Confused and uncertain. He looks out to see:

HILLY'S POV - MABEL NOYES

polishing off a Ding-Dong, frowning as she thinks:

MABEL'S THOUGHTS
I could be making money hand over fist and here I am watching this brat do a trick with a stupid trap door.

HILLY

it's as if he heard her thoughts:

HILLY
If you're thinking about anything stupid like trap doors, a tomato might go down through one, but it would never come back up!

ON MABEL

who stops mid-Ding Dong. That's just what she was thinking.

HILLY

puts the scarf back on the platform. Waves his wand and steps surreptitiously on the hidden pedal:

HILLY
And now the Return of the Disappearing Tomato! Presto-majesto -- return!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The scarf pushes up in a sphere, and Hilly whips it off to reveal -- the tomato which has returned.

HILLY
Ta-daaa!

THE AUDIENCE

Applauding but far less than Hilly hoped. Becka, who's saved a seat for Joe, looks at her watch. What can be keeping him?

ON HILLY -- A QUICK SERIES OF CUTS:

HILLY
The Disappearing Radio!

THE AUDIENCE

claps a little less politely as Joe appears, takes his seat next to Becka. She sneaks a suspicious glance at him.

HILLY

trying to give it even more oomph!

HILLY
The Disappearing Lawn Chair!

AN OLD RADIO

reappears

HILLY
The Returning Radio!

THE AUDIENCE

Just a trickle of applause now. Across the aisle, Becka spots Nancy Voss -- also late, taking her seat.

HILLY

in a sweat himself, working harder.

HILLY'S POV - HIS AUDIENCE

Sitting lumpishly in the hot, hazy sun. Joe chews gum and stares straight ahead like he's in a trance. Barney Applegate sits with his two similarly bespectacled PARENTS and yawns, bored. Marie and Bryant distracted -- even Ruth rubs her head, feeling achy. What's worse, some people are leaving.

HILLY

desperate not to lose them, he yells frantically:

CONTINUED:

HILLY
And now -- The Grand Finale! The Disappearing Human!

People settle back reluctantly in their seats:

HILLY
C'mere, Davey.

Davey inches forward fearfully resigned. He whispers loudly:

DAVEY
Hilly, I'm scared. What if I don't come back?

HILLY
You <u>will</u>! Everything else did, didn't it?

DAVEY
Yeah, but you didn't disappear nothin that was alive!

Hilly weakens at Davey's heartfelt plea. Looks out

HILLY'S POV - THE AUDIENCE

In a matter of seconds they'll be gone.

HILLY

resentful and determined, hisses:

HILLY
Do it, and I'll give you anything.

DAVEY
All your G.I. Joes?

HILLY
All of them -- just get up on that platform now!

DAVEY

quivering all over, he obeys. Walks across the stage with his pudgy legs, stepping onto the sheet-covered orange crate.

ANGLE ON AUDIENCE FEATURING EV

He senses something wrong -- perhaps the only one in this heat-dazed group who does.

HILLY

booms at his dazed audience:

CONTINUED:

HILLY
And NOW! The biggest secret the Orient holds! Known to few and practiced by even fewer! The Disappearing Assistant!

He throws the sheet over Davey's quivering, weeping form. As it billows over him like Casper the Ghost, an audible but muffled little sob comes from beneath and then:

DAVEY
Hilly, please --

Hilly hesitates. And then makes his decision:

HILLY
(a whisper)
Off you go -- know that you can -- Cause I learned this trick from the Tommyknocker Man --

He waves his hand at the sheet-covered form and stomps on the hidden pedal. That low HUM as Hilly yells with bravado:

HILLY
Presto-majesto!!! -- Disappear!

ANGLE ON EV

capturing this Kodak moment with his camera as

ON THE PLATFORM

The sheet puffs down lazily, settling flat.

HILLY

whips it away and shrieks in triumphant showmanship:

HILLY
Ta-daaaaa!!!!

ON THE PLATFORM

Davey's gone. Vanished.

THE AUDIENCE

A moment of stunned silence. Then polite applause as

DICK ALLISON

moves in to wrap things up in his best Ed Sullivan manner:

CONTINUED:

DICK ALLISON
Thanks to young Hillman Brown for that fine ending to our really big shoe. See you all next year!

HILLY
Wait -- wait, I'm not done!

THE AUDIENCE

his precious audience -- already on the way to their cars.

MARIE
Enough, Hilly. Get your brother and let's go home.

BARNEY
Seeya, Hilly! Good trick!
(under the platform)
Bye, Davey! Good job!

HILLY

just about apoplectic, yells:

HILLY
He's not under there, damnit!

THE AUDIENCE

Fast disappearing to their cars -- Bryant out of patience.

BRYANT
Don't swear, Hilly. Now get your brother and come on.

He moves on.

ALONE ON STAGE

Hilly steps on the sewing machine pedal. It hums - <u>hmmmmmmmm</u>.

HILLY
Presto-majesto, return!

THE SHEET

stays flat, however. No movement. No Davey.

HILLY

gulps, afraid. Steps on it again, really. starting to freak.

HILLY
Presto-majesto, return! <u>Presto-majesto, RETURN!</u>

CONTINUED:

A wind blows -- for an instant the sheet puffs and billows the way it did when the other objects returned, but not this time. Nothing. Fast now, all in a whispered rush:

HILLY
Please God, I'm sorry, He can have all my G.I. Joes, anything, I swear it. Just let him come back.

He looks up to find Ev staring at him.

EV
Hilly, what is it? What's wrong?

Hilly stomps again and again on the pedal, frantic now:

HILLY
I'll do anything, just bring him back! Bring him back now!

Marie and Bryant there now -- Ruth, too.

MARIE
Dear God, what does he mean? Who's he talking to?

BRYANT
Hilly, stop this foolishness and bring Davey back -- this instant.

HILLY
I can't! I'm trying, but I can't!

Ruth, leans down, calmly puts her hands on his shoulders.

RUTH
Where is he, honey? Where did he go?

HILLY
I don't know! I don't know where things go when they stop being here!

Ev and Bryant lift up the sheet to reveal Hilly's invention -- a child's contraption made of wires, batteries and the old sewing machine pedal. Ev steps on it and a GREEN LIGHT blinks ON and OFF, ON and OFF as a hysteric Hilly sits on the stage, pulling his legs up and crying:

HILLY
Come back, Davey! Come back!

END OF ACT V

ACT VI

EXT. UNDER THE SCHOOL STAGE - AFTERNOON

Ruth shines her powerful flashlight, but there's no sign of Davey -- just flattened grass and a queer electrical smell. She re-emerges to face Ev and the distraught Browns:

RUTH
I'm sure there's a perfectly rational explanation.

BRYANT
He probably just wandered off into the high grass and fell asleep.

EV
Without any of us seeing it?

MARIE
He never would have crossed the highway alone. Never.

RUTH
Not to worry, we'll find him.

ON THE STAGE

Hilly checks his contraption's wiring as Ruth kneels down:

RUTH
Tell me, honey, how did you think of the trick?

HILLY
The voices told me. They told me what to do and how to do it.

RUTH
Whose voices, honey?

HILLY
I don't know! I don't know!

EV
Take it easy, son.

HILLY
It's all your fault! I wish you'd never given me that stupid magic set in the first place!

EV
Now, kiddo -- you don't mean that.

HILLY
I do! I hate magic and I hate you!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A stricken Ev limps off -- Ruth seeing him put a hand to his face and turn away so no one will notice he's crying.

INT. SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Anxious now, Ruth calls Butch Dugan up in Derry.

RUTH
Jangles? Is Butch there? It's Ruth Merrill.

She eyes the darkening sky.

DUGAN (OS)
Hey, Ruthie.

RUTH
I need you.

EXT. HAVEN WOODS OUTSKIRTS - DUSK

Ruth -- Dugan by her side -- addresses 40 or 50 Havenites:

RUTH
Everyone keep your flashlight with you at all times -- we've got a little boy lost, we don't need to add any grown men or women.

She looks at these people she's known all her lives -- at their faces in the dark -- as they stare back at her.

DUGAN
What are you gawking at? Come on! Let's find David Brown!

EXT. BURNING WOODS - NIGHT

Distant thunder and heat lightning but no rain yet as under Ruth and Dugan's command, the searchers comb the woods with lights and bullhorns. Not an easy task -- flashlight beams zizagging aimlessly on unfamiliar terrain as men and women stumble through wet places and fog, clamber over branches and deadfalls, mosquitoes humming and buzzing.

EXT. ANDERSON/GARDENER FARM - NIGHT

Bobbi and Gard -- tired, dirty and not altogether hospitable, stand talking with Ruth -- at the front door.

RUTH
One moment he was there, the next he was gone.

BOBBI
How awful. Of course we'll come.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARD
I'll just get our rain gear.

Through the partly open door, Ruth sees a faint GREEN LIGHT shining inside by the basement door. Picking up Ruth's vibe:

BOBBI
We must look a fright. We've both been up on writing jags -- not sleeping much, I'm afraid.

And then Gard is back with their raincoats, ready to go.

EXT. ANDERSON PROPERTY - NIGHT

As they come along, Bobbi stops Ruth:

BOBBI
We'll do better splitting up. Gard, check out that way. Ruth, you take this path but be careful. There's no telling what you can run into out there -- coyotes, anything

INT. ANOTHER PART OF THE WOODS - NIGHT

Gard has run into Ev and joined him in the search:

GARD
What do you mean he's not lost?

EV
He's just...not there.

GARD
He wandered off, someone took him.

EV
The magic trick was <u>real</u>.

GARD
C'mon, now, what are you saying?

EV
I'm telling you he vanished into thin air.

Just at that instant, a FLASH OF LIGHTNING divides the sky.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE WOODS - NIGHT

By herself, Ruth feels the unusual stillness of the forest before a storm. No bird sounds, no animal sounds, nothing. She makes her way through the trees -- shining her torch to reveal tractor tracks from the Tomcat leading into the woods. Curious, she follows them --

UP AHEAD

Her flashlight reveals huge MOUNDS OF DIRT that Bobbi and Gard have unearthed. Suspicions aroused, she starts toward them. Moving CLOSER to investigate only to sense -- no, to hear -- something right behind her as a BOLT OF THUNDER hits and she turns at the same time smack into

A SNARLING DOG -- VERY CLOSE ON HIM

It's Peter -- and he scares the hell out of her (and us) as he's revealed in an explosive crack of LIGHTNING.

CLOSE ON RUTH

freaked but relieved to see it's only him.

RUTH
Am I glad to see you.

PETER

doesn't seem to recognize her. On the contrary, he growls -- even more savage than he was that day at the vet's.

CLOSER ON RUTH

She takes a doggie treat out of her pocket -- extends it toward him as a peace offering:

RUTH
It's just me, boy -- here --

PETER

couldn't seem to care less -- he's lunging for her.

RUTH

screams just as Bobbi emerges, pulls him back by the collar:

BOBBI
No -- Peter! No! Are you okay?

RUTH
Yeah. What the hell's wrong with him?

BOBBI
He's been acting weird lately. Bad, Peter -- bad.

Peter hangs his head shamefacedly.

RUTH
Weird? He's turned into Cujo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOBBI
He was strange at the vet's the other day, too. All the animals were. I thought maybe we were about to have an earthquake or something and they were sensing it before us.
(cocking her ear)
Wait --

RUTH
Do you hear something?

BOBBI
Very faint -- like a child's cry. It came from over that way.

RUTH
Come on.

BOBBI
I'll be right there -- let me just take him back to the house and I'll meet you.

Ruth goes off, successfully rerouted. Bobbi takes a deep breath. Looks down at Peter -- his muzzle all dark now.

BOBBI
That was a close one.

EXT. HAVEN POLICE STATION - ALMOST DAWN

Pouring now as Becka mans the phones:

BECKA
Missing Child Hot Line..no, Father, still no sign of the poor little lamb..

Ruth and Dugan come in the door with the Browns and Ev -- soaked and discouraged.

BRYANT
You think he's been abducted, don't you?

RUTH
I'm afraid so, Bry. There's no other rational explanation. He couldn't have wandered outside the search area unless someone took him.

DUGAN
We've put out an APB. Someone will spot him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EV
But your men -- they'll keep looking.

DUGAN
When the rain lets up and we've all had some sleep, we'll start again.

MARIE
Oh, God, what are we going to do?

Ruth puts her arm around her:

RUTH
Try not to worry, honey. We'll find him. I know we will.

Bryant puts his arm around Marie, and with Ev, they leave. Alone now, Ruth turns to Dugan

DUGAN
If he was out there, we would have found him.

RUTH
I know.

He goes into the kitchen as Becka looks up at Ruth:

BECKA
That poor, poor family.

RUTH
Speaking of poor, how's Joe?

BECKA
Hmm?

RUTH
Is his cold better? We sure missed him last night.

Before Becka can respond, Dugan calls out from the kitchen -- rummaging in the icebox:

DUGAN
Hey, Ruthie -- you got any Cokes?

RUTH
On the bottom shelf.
(to Becka)
Go on home, you must be exhausted.

BECKA
If you're sure you don't need me.

Becka leaves. Ruth, feeling headachy, rubs her head as Dugan reappears in the doorway -- a Coke in hand:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUGAN
You all right?

RUTH
It's been awhile since I've pulled an allnighter. I'm out of practice.

DUGAN
This has gotta be the stillest, hottest summer in memory.

RUTH
How about some breakfast? I make a mean raisin loaf.

DUGAN
I just bet you do.

INT. NANCY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Joe getting dressed -- Nancy still in bed.

JOE
That kid is the best thing that ever happened to us. With any luck, he'll be missing for a week.

NANCY
What about Becka?

JOE
By the time that fat old mare catches onto what's really going on, we'll be long gone.

INT. RUTH'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Where she hands Dugan another Coke to go with his toast.

RUTH
You and those soft drinks -- that sugar's gonna be the death of you.

DUGAN
Each day they find something else that was bad for you is now good for you. I figure if I just bide my time, these will be, too.

He wanders

INTO THE SCHOOLROOM

Where he surveys the DOLLS of every kind and nationality perched on benches. Ruth behind him as he looks in wonder:

CONTINUED:

DUGAN
All these dolls...

RUTH
One of those high-priced shrinks would probably say I'm acting out my unfulfilled longings for children, to which I say, whatever the reason, they make me happy.

He takes a deep breath, summons his nerve:

DUGAN
Listen, Ruthie --

RUTH
Butch --

DUGAN
I know what you're going to say, and you're right -- there ain't a man alive who could a candle to Ralph Merrill, I ought to know, he was my partner and my best friend, but he's gone, Ruth, gone five years, and I love you for all I'm worth, I'd soon as kill for you.
(before she can speak)
No, don't say anything. I probably made a fool of myself enough already.

RUTH
You didn't.

DUGAN
I didn't?

RUTH
You never could.

DUGAN
You mean you ---? Well, holy Toledo!

Without further ado, he lifts her clean off her feet and kisses her with an enthusiasm she returns. Then:

RUTH
We've got to get some sleep.

DUGAN
I got a better idea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUTH
I just bet you do, but we've got business. We've got to find him, Butch. Got to.

DUGAN
We'll find him, won't we, you guys?
(winking at the DOLLS)
Tell her she's worrying her pretty head for nothing. We'll find him.

Giving her a kiss, he leaves. Ruth watches him go down the front walk to his patrol car. A wave goodbye.

ANOTHER ANGLE - RUTH

Her headache swelling to a thick throbbing beat now. She sits down. Closes her eyes, massaging her head. Even breathing now. MOVE in CLOSE on her as she breathes in -- out -- in -- out. Her head better as drifts off to sleep.

INT. PAULSON HOUSE - MORNING

Becka sits at the dining room table with a tangle of wires and batteries plus a motor from an old blender and the back board of an old radio in front of her -- as Chuck Woolery instructs her what to do with the blowtorch from the Sony:

CHUCK
Light it with the kitchen match -- that's it -- now solder that red wire -- no..not there..there.

BECKA
I'm just no good at this. I'm too clumsy.

CHUCK
Not too much solder, mind! A little dab'll do ya. Good girl!

BECKA
But what if Ruth was wrong?

CHUCK
What if indeed? And what if Joe was throwing that hussy down in a great big pile of circulars and putting the shoes to her? What then?

BECKA
I'd have to do something about it.

CHUCK
You are, Becka. You are.

INT. RUTH'S "SCHOOLROOM" - MORNING

Ruth in the chair asleep when a low voice whispers:

VOICE (OS)
You'll never find him, Ruth.

She opens her eyes, whirls around -- no one's there. Just the DOLLS staring at her with those eyes. When:

ANOTHER VOICE (OS)
He's no more in the woods than the President of the United States is.

She whirls again -- is it her imagination, or is it coming from the Richard Nixon doll?

THIRD VOICE (OS)
In fact, he's not on the face of this earth.

She turns again -- it seems to have come from a Raggedy Ann doll. But that can't be. Can't. Afraid now, filled with fear:

RUTH
What kind of joke is this? Who's doing this?

ANOTHHER VOICE (OS)
He's with the Tommyknockers!

She turns -- just missing the dolls speaking --

MORE VOICES (OS)
The Tommyknockers!

Turning again -- the dolls an unseen chorus of voices:

MANY VOICES (OS)
The Tommyknockers!

Ruth turns in a circle now, faster and faster -- a dizzying 360 degrees -- spinning out of control and then

RUTH

comes awake with a gasp -- she's nodded off in her chair.

RUTH'S POV - THE DOLLS

perfectly still, not moving. Just inanimate dolls.

ON RUTH

Her exhausted mind is playing tricks. Or is it...?

EXT. PAULSON HOUSE - LATER - MORNING

Through the window, Joe spots Becka sitting in her rocker, watching the Regis and Kathie Lee Show.

CONTINUED:

JOE
I'll leave you with the TV. That's all you care about, anyway.

Wets his hair, musses it to look like he's been up all night.

INT. PAULSON HOUSE - MORNING

As Joe enters, Becka looks up:

BECKA
Any luck finding the boy?

JOE
Nope. We looked high and low, but there weren't no sign of that kid.

He goes to the fridge, pops open a beer.

BECKA
(softly)
Thou shalt not suffer a liar.

JOE
What'd you say?

BECKA
I said that's too bad.

JOE
Turn that TV off -- you know how I hate it on in the daytime.

BECKA
Turn it offf yourself.

JOE
What'd you say, woman?

BECKA
I said you can damn well turn it off yourself, Joseph Paulson!

Joe, shocked at this display of temper, raises his eyebrows,

JOE
What's gotten into you, woman? Sassing me. See who'll be sorry.

Setting his beer on top of the TV next to Jesus, he pushes the power button with his other hand, and 2000-plus volts of current slam into him. His eyes pop open -- his hand clenched so tightly it breaks the bottle of beer. In the grip of this terrible current, Joe reaches out to Becka:

BECKA
Joe?!

CONTINUED:

Suddenly having second thoughts, she reaches out toward his looping, spasming hand --

REGIS PHILBIN
Uh-huh, Becka, mustn't touch him.

She pulls back as Joe, his finger nailed to the On button, screams as GREEN FIRE electrocutes him -- the current driving him up on his toes, galvanizing him.

KATHIE LEE
You don't want to join him where he's going, now do you?

BECKA
No!

On TV, the channel switches by itself to FAMILY FEUD where a BLACK FAMILY yell out in unison:

CONTESTANTS
Good answer! Good answer!

Becka watches JOE fry as the plastic Jesus on the TV jitters and turns red-hot. Below it another surreal, dizzying vision as the channel switches to

THE ARSENIO HALL STUDIO AUDIENCE

making that unspeakably infamous hooting sound as

JOE

falls over the top of the TV -- one last final twitch, then still -- his face next to the plastic statue of Jesus which is now melted into sludge.

CHUCK WOOLERY

grins devilishly at Becka:

CHUCK
Better blow this popstand while you can, dear -- we're about to go skyhigh!

GREEN FIRE shoots out the back of the TV, spreading to the chintz curtains which start to blaze.

BECKA

obediently makes her way to the front door -- one last look

ON TV

The hosts sign off from the world of Entertainment Tonight:

CONTINUED:

JOHN TESH
LEEZA GIBBONS
Goodbye everybody! Goodbye!

EXT. PAULSON HOUSE - DAY

Inside the picture tube explodes and the house catches fire -- the sound of sirens screaming in the distance as the lone figure of Becka Paulson stands watching from a safe distance, smiling and humming the theme from Entertainment Tonight.

END OF ACT VI

ACT VII

EXT. PAULSON HOUSE - DAWN

Across the street, quite a crowd of early rising SPECTATORS have gathered to watch Dick Allison and his Fire Volunteers do battle with the burning house. Ruth meanwhile tries to question Becka as the ATTENDANTS strap her into the van that will take her to Juniper Hill for observation:

RUTH
What happened, Becka? Tell me.

BECKA
He was cheating on me with that hussy down at the PO, so I fixed him.

Across the street there's a scream as NANCY VOSS joins the crowd of onlookers and is told what happened to Joe.

NANCY VOSS
You crazy bitch! What did you do?

BECKA
I fixed him, ya whore of Babylon! And there's a long fork in hell waiting to toast you, too!

She smiles, turning back to Ruth:

BECKA
You see, it was real simple. Just like Chuck said.

ATTENDANT
Ma'am, we have to go.

RUTH
Chuck who?

BECKA
Chuck Woolery. From the Love Connection on teevee? He told me exactly what to do.

Ruth stands there thunderstruck as the doors close on Becka's smile.

EXT. BOBBI AND GARD'S HOUSE - DAWN

Similar to the shot that first introduced them -- Peter on the front porch as we move into

INT. BOBBI AND GARD'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Gard's arms around Bobbi -- both of them asleep. And then, in the other room, a CLICK makes him comes awake with a start. An intruder? Definitely something.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARD
Pete? Is that you, boy?

Evidently not. Without waking Bobbi, Gard gets out of bed, quietly makes his way into

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN

As he comes in to find -- no one there. He does see, however, something new in the corner -- in Bobbi's work area. Her old manual Underwood typewriter that we saw her working on. A gadget has been hooked up behind it -- half an egg carton with D-cells in the cradles, each capped with a wire going to a circuit board that goes into the typewriter -- a roll of computer paper hanging above it.

Next to it, Gard finds a few manuscript pages. The title page reads THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS. A NEW NOVEL by ROBERTA ANDERSON. Gard flips to the dedication page -- reads it aloud:

GARD
'For Gard, who's always there when I need him.'

He's touched by the sentiment -- when suddenly there's a click and a hum. He whirls to see

THE TYPEWRITER

As GREEN LIGHT spills out of the ancient old Underwood -- the old manual glowing like the walls of an aquarium.

ON GARD

open--mouthed as

THE TYPEWRITER KEYS

depress themselves and type like a player piano -- all by themselves before his wide, staring eyes.

CLOSE ON GARD

A single bark of bewildered laughter escapes him:

GARD
No --

The old carriage moves rapidly back to the margin -- the keys a hammering blur of speed as they rattle off words. DING! BANG! The carriage returns as letters spill across the page -- as Bobbi's novel types itself in front of his eyes.

ON GARD

takes an involuntarily shambling step backward on legs that feel like stilts. Only to hear a moan. Turns -- it's coming from the bedroom. He takes a step toward it to see

GARD'S POV - THROUGH THE DOORWAY

Bobbi still in bed, mumbling in her deep sleep as

THE TYPEWRITER ON HER DESK

picks up her thoughts and types them as rapidly as she thinks them -- like watching a mental news ticker.

GARD

Seeing the connection across the room which shakes him to his very roots -- utterly freaked.

EXT. THE SITE - DAY

As they come through the woods:

BOBBI
I'm sorry. I didn't mean for it to scare you. I thought you'd like it.

GARD
I'd be lying if I said I didn't. A telepathic typewriter -- my God.

They come out

INTO THE CLEARING

The excavation goes down thirty or forty feet now, the slope simply cut away to reveal an ever larger slab of metal.

BOBBI
It's really something, isn't it?

GARD
Only the biggest, most important utterly mind-blowing thing that ever happened. When this comes out, the New York Times is going to look like the National Enquirer. People are going to change their religions over this.

BOBBI
I know.

GARD
I only have one question --
(a long beat, then)
Why isn't it doing <u>anything</u> to me? Why don't I feel <u>any</u> different?

BOBBI
I don't know. What's happening -- what's failing to happen -- proves nothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GARD
Maybe..maybe it's the plate in my head -- maybe that's what's doing it.

She looks at him -- as if entertaining this possibility for the first time. Then, seeing his exhaustion:

BOBBI (cont)
Tell you what -- let's take today off.

GARD
I thought you wanted to dig.

BOBBI
You were right. I've been pushing too hard and you're wiped. Let's go into town. It's July 4th.

GARD
Next thing you're gonna tell me you want to do something corny like dance and watch the fireworks.

BOBBI
I think something's going to happen.

GARD
What do you mean?

BOBBI
I don't know. I just know we have to be there.

EXT. HAVEN - TOWN COMMON - DAY

Unusually still and hot -- dogs laying panting in the shade. Looking normal, perfectly normal as the people of Haven go about their business, sweeping and hosing down sidewalks in front of their shops, putting up American flags in readiness for July 4th. Setting up tables for the big barbecue. Red, white and blue crepe paper everywhere for the festivities -- everyone getting ready for the big holiday.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

A PARADE -- a little edgy and loud in a Disney-like way -- makes its way down the Common -- Americana with a vengeance as all of Haven turns out for the fun. With bespectacled little BARNEY APPLEGATE in the lead, a small brass band goes past a crowd of cheering watchers -- including Bobbi and Gard -- gorging on cotton candy and popcorn.

A MONTAGE OF FESTIVITIES

continuing now -- building in spirit and jollity as Gard and

CONTINUED:

Bobbi join people we've come to know -- witnessing or taking part in a sack race -- games, etc.

BY A SHOOTING GALLERY BOOTH

Bobbi and Gard have run into Freeman Moss who practices his aim at the moving target.

GARD
Mr. Moss here was kind enough to pick me up in the middle of a rainstorm last week.

BOBBI
That was very kind of you, neighbor.

Moss has got a good aim -- BAM, the target falls over.

MOSS
Shoot a pickle.

A CHURCH SUPPER

Long tables with butcher paper set up right on the Common -- the town coming together for this social. Hot dogs and hamburgers sizzle on the grill; appealing fresh produce -- juicy beefsteak tomatoes and corn on the cob -- laid out on platters. Huge watermelons being sliced in half with giant knives. Everyone helping themselves and eating up a storm.

AT THE BUFFET TABLE

Gossipy Mabel Noyes brings Gard and Bobbi up to date:

MABEL
Nothing but a Rice Crispy by the time the Volunteers got to him, and there was Becka, just standing there as lad-di-da as you please watching Joe bar-bee-cue and humming that show from teevee --
(hums theme from ET)
Dum-dee-dum-dum-dum-dum, dum-dum-dum...

INT. HILLMAN ATTIC - AFTERNOON

Hilly, feverish and hollow-eyed from no sleep, tries the wires in combination after combination -- obsessed with finding a way to bring Davey back:

HILLY
Please come back. If you just come back, I'll give you all my G.I. Joes -- Snake-Eyes and Crystal Ball -- Mobat -- even the Terrordome.

CONTINUED:

Only to put two wires together and a BRIGHT GREEN LIGHT bathes the room and he suddenly hears:

DAVEY'S VOICE (OS)
Hilly, help. Help me!

HILLY
Davey?

DAVEY'S VOICE (OS)
It's cold and it's dark here, and I can't breathe. I want to come ho-ooome...

ON THE ATTIC STAIRS

Ev, on his way up, hears Hilly talking. Stops to listen:

HILLY (OS)
Where are you, Davey? Where are you?

DAVEY'S VOICE (OS)
I'm with the Tommyknockers! Please help me!

Ev barges in -- but now the connection is broken, the green light gone. Hilly, hysteric, talks to thin air:

HILLY
I don't know how! Tell me what to do and I'll do it! Please, Davey, please!

EV
Hilly, who are you talking to?

Hilly's eyes roll, go white. He falls into a dead faint in Ev's arms.

EV
Hilly?!
(a yell downstairs)
Help! Somebody, help!

EXT. TOWN COMMON - DUSK

A SQUARE DANCE with a live country band has begun under the stars. Old timers swap stories as young people dance; women trade recipes; Mabel whispers gossip to Mrs. Applegate about newly bereaved Nancy Voss. Gard, a bit of an outsider, as always, helps BARNEY APPLEGATE get a kite into the air.

BARNEY
Thanks, Mr. Gardener.

GARD
Anytime, Barney.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Barney runs off, Gard turns -- smack into Delbert Chiles who's got a beer in one hand and put away god knows how many.

CHILES
Well, look what the cat drug in....

GARD
You got a problem, Chiles?

CHILES
Problem? I ain't got no problem. Course I ain't had your advantages neither -- I weren't no high-flown college professor..

GARD
(turning to go)
It's been fun chatting with you, too.

CHILES
Hell, I hear you done majored in drinking. Is it true you're most always drunk as a coon on stump-likker?

GARD
It's true, all right, but you look like you've got at least a doctorate going yourself.

CHILES
Lording it over ordinary folks, as if quoting someone who died a long time ago made you smell sweeter than other people.

GARD
I think you've got me beat on smell, too, Chiles.

CHILES
You gettin sma'at?

GARD
No, all evidence points to the contrary of that, no sir.

CHILES
You sonovabitch!

Ruth arrives with Freeman Moss just in time to separate them:

FREEMAN MOSS
Hold it there, boys.

CONTINUED:

RUTH
Godalmighty, Delbert, haven't you got something better to do than pick a fight? And you, Gard -- go dance with Bobbi. This is a party. Go on, now.

EXT. THE COMMON - NIGHT

Dark now as the people of Haven dance under lanterns on the green. Gard squaredancing with Bobbi when, across the street, an ambulance pulls up in front of the diner.

GARD
I'll be right back.

EXT. HAVEN DINER - NIGHT

An ambulance driver carries a feverish and rambling Hilly down the front walk wrapped in a blanket -- followed by Bryant, Marie and Ev.

MARIE
He's burning up.

HILLY
All the GI Joes..all my GI Joes...

MARIE
What's he saying?

EV
He's delirious.

MARIE
Oh, God, what if they call about Davey --

BRYANT
One of us better stay here.

EV
You both stay. I'll call you the second there's any news.

MARIE
Dad --

EV
Pray for us, honey.

Gard runs up -- as Ev gets in the back with Hilly:

GARD
What's going on? Where are you taking him?

CONTINUED:

EV
Out of Haven.
(quietly)
Something's wrong here.

At which point the small BAND on the green breaks into "The Star Spangled Banner," Gard looks over to see

GARD'S POV - ON THE BANDSTAND

As Ruth leads the townspeople in singing our national anthem -- hand over her heart, their spiritual leader -- the flag behind her blowing in the wind, a rippling landscape of red, white and blue.

AT THE AMBULANCE

Trying to talk over the brassy din:

EV
He said the Tommyknockers had him.

GARD
What -- like the nursery rhyme?

EV
I don't know what it is -- I just know too many strange things are happening here.

THE HAVENITES

a little CLOSER than we should be as they sing the familiar words a little bit too loudly -- distorting them into Grant Wood portraits with an edge.

GARD

tries to question Ev further but the driver moves between them:

AMBULANCE DRIVER
Mister -- we gotta go.

GARD
Safe journey.

Ev nods -- a beat between them -- and then the doors close.

ANOTHER ANGLE - GARD

As he watches the ambulance pull away -- receding in the distance now -- out of sight:

GARD
Safe journey you two.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bobbi runs over.

BOBBI
Come on -- you're gonna miss them!

Gard nods as Bobbi drags him

ONTO THE COMMON - NIGHT

as the good citizens of Haven watch the sky in anticipation of this yearly ritual from their separate areas.

THE SKY

At first the usual display -- Roman candles, fireworks of all colors and forms, you name it --

ON GARD

watching with Bobbi, looking up.

INT. AMBULANCE - MOVING - NIGHT

As it speeds out of Haven, Hilly moans deliriously:

HILLY
'Off you go!
Know that you can!---'

EV
It's all right, son. I'm here,
Gramps is here.

HILLY
'Cause I learned this trick
From the Tommyknocker Man --'

EXT. THE SKY OVER HAVEN SQUARE - NIGHT

As a new burst of pyrotechnics goes off -- exploding across the heavens in all GREEN starbursts!

GARD

watches with Bobbi as

GARD'S POV - CLOSER ON THE NIGHT SKY

GREEN, GREEN GREEN -- like nets patterning as we PAN DOWN to THE TOWNSPEOPLE as they leave their individual watching spots and come together on the green. Newly bereaved NANCY VOSS and DELBERT CHILES; MABEL NOYES; the black GAS MECHANIC from Elt Barker's Shell Station that Bobbi met at the vet's; BARNEY and his parents HENRY and OLGA APPLEGATE -- all three with the same coke-bottle thick glasses; BRYANT and MARIE BROWN and even RUTH MERRILL comes forward to watch the pyrotechnics. Bobbi leaving his side to join them -- as if

CONTINUED:

the spectacle in the sky were drawing them together like a magnet.

ON GARD

wondering where they're going.

THE TOWNSPEOPLE

they gather together wordlessly on the Common into one homogeneous mass. They stand with their mouths agape -- oohing and aahing like Moonies as

THE SKY ABOVE

fills with green starshapes, but instead of going out, they lose their individual shapes and merging together into one spectacular green vision.

INT. JUNIPER HILL - MENTAL WARD (DERRY) - NIGHT

Norman Bates has got nothing on strait-jacketed Becka who sing-songs in her padded cell:

BECKA
Late last night
And the night before
Tommyknockers, Tommyknockers
Knocking at the door...

GARD

stares at the Havenites with disbelief -- sensing something weird is going on between them

THE PEOPLE

something communal as their faces are bathed in the green lights. All of them blissed out as if they were having a religious experience -- all of them that is except

GARD

taking it in as

THE HEAVENS

all green now -- a network that blankets the sky.

CLOSE ON GARD

who wonders aloud:

GARD
What the hell --

EXT. ANDERSON/GARDENER FARM - NIGHT

No one there, but the sound of Bobbi's new and improved typewriter going inside.

CLOSER ON GARD ON THE COMMON

As he wonders aloud:

GARD
What the hell is going on here?

BOBBI'S WORD-ACCORDIAN

Ding! Bang! The carriage returns, types more and we move in even closer so we can read the paper. In the center, typing the same word again and again, blurringly fast:

TOMMYKNOCKERS
TOMMYKNOCKERS
TOMMYKNOCKERS
TOMMYKNOCKERS

EXT. THE SITE - NIGHT

As GREEN LIGHT streams out of the partially excavated THING in the ground and indelibly silhouettes all of Haven beyond -- an epic, indelible last shot.

We SUPERIMPOSE: "TO BE CONTINUED"

END OF ACT VII

END OF PART I